

# Socialist Worker

For a socialist alternative to New Labour

80p

## Heavy bombing has already started. Blair has claimed his latest victims

Full coverage of the war on Iraq and the global movement to stop it

If not now,  
when?  
If not us,  
who?

# TAKE MASS ACTION TO STOP THE WAR

**Assembly  
gathers  
anti-war  
majority**

“LISTEN TO us, stop the war” is the message of the People’s Assembly for Peace next Wednesday in London.

Hundreds of delegates from groups against the war across the country will gather in Westminster Central Hall, just opposite parliament.

It is a challenge to parliament’s refusal to reflect the anti-war mood sweeping Britain.

“This assembly is an opportunity for ordinary people to really make themselves heard,” said Jeremy Corbyn MP.

“Parliament has still not voted definitively on whether to go to war, yet 40 percent of all British armed forces are already in the battlefield.”

George Galloway MP added, “If we can’t find enough members of parliament to represent us, then we’ll have to find our members of the people’s parliament on Wednesday.”

Trade union leaders are also speaking up in favour of the assembly.

Mark Serwotka, general secretary of the civil servants’ PCS union, said, “The people of this country do not want war with Iraq—however, this is not reflected in parliament.

“The people’s parliament is an important initiative which will allow ordinary people, trade unionists, peace campaigners and peoples of all walks of life, religion and cultures to demonstrate that we do not want war.”

Bob Crow of the rail workers’ RMT union said, “If the government won’t stop this war then people will have to work out how we can stop this war by ourselves.”

Every anti-war activist should ensure delegates go from their area to the assembly to make it a large and powerful expression of the feeling across Britain.

● Turn to page 3 and centre pages for details

## Students get short measure

EDUCATION secretary Charles Clarke revealed this week that most of the future expansion in university places will be on "employer-led" two-year courses.

These will be "competitively priced" so that students opt for them rather than expensive traditional degrees.

Employers will say what sort of workers they want and colleges will seek to fit their requirements.

Meanwhile those with the cash can still do the sort of degree that will be a passport to higher earnings.

## Future crashes for aero workers

ROLLS-ROYCE, the aero-engine maker, is to cut another 1,100 jobs.

The latest cuts follow over 1,000 jobs axed by the firm just over a year ago.

Workers at the firm's plants in Bristol, Derby and Hucknall, near Nottingham, will bear the brunt of the new cuts.

Rolls-Royce is the world's second biggest aircraft engine maker and was expected to announce profits over £240 million this week.

## War costs even more than blood

THE GOVERNMENT has secretly written cheques for £33 billion to firms which supplied arms to Iraq in the 1980s.

The official Export Credit Guarantee Department admitted last week that the money as paid out to cover losses the firms made on the arms deals.

Among those paid out of public money were arms makers Racal, Thorn-EMI and Marconi.

The money could have aided for 12 new schools.

In all, Tory and New Labour governments have handed over a total of £1 billion to firms to subsidise arms exports to Iraq in the 1980s. That could have built eight fully equipped hospitals.

And now the government is prepared to spend at a minimum the money that could pay for 1,248 schools or 28 hospitals on a war against the same Iraq it paid British firms to supply arms to.

## Nuke safety is still ignored

THE SAFETY of Britain's nuclear industry has been undermined by an internal report by a director of nuclear generator British Energy.

The leaked report by director John Moares says, "Society demands that we do all in our power to protect the workforce, the public and the environment."

"And yet against this background we find that nuclear safety-related equipment's reliability and availability is not racked."

"System health checks are not conducted effectively. The nuclear safety significance of the maintenance backlog is not assessed."

## Heavy bill on your doormat

MILLIONS OF workers in Britain face a cut in living standards as new council tax bills are set across the country.

A survey by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy suggests that average bills will rise by 1.9 percent.

The figure is almost three times inflation, and much more than the percentage pay rises most workers will get.

In many areas council tax rises could be even higher.



## MANY REASONS TO MAKE HIM GO

# Blair wants us to pay for NHS care

**THE DRIVE to war has caused many people to demand that Tony Blair should go.**

But there are many other reasons why he should be toppled.

Blair is also leading a war against workers in Britain.

Outrageously this week Blair suggested that people might have to pay to use vital public services.

He said his government was looking at new ways of charging NHS patients and parents of school children.

He called for "new forms of co-payment in the public sector".

This is an assault on the whole foundations of the welfare state.



HEALTH UP for grabs

If pushed through, the result would be a two-tier system in every level of our hospitals and schools.

Patients with no money will be lucky to get a bed and basic care, while the rich will be able to afford to buy the best hospitals, doctors and treatment.

The children of the rich

will get the best teachers and resources thrown at them, with all the best extra-curricular activities, while the children of the poor will be stuck learning by rote in sink schools.

Former Labour health secretary Frank Dobson responded with outrage to the plans:

"Talk of co-payment—in other words, charges, fees and perhaps vouchers—cannot possibly do anything other than discriminate in favour of the well informed and well off."

The debate shows the real issues underlying the argument this week over "foundation hospitals". This means a group of elite hospitals and a two-tier system.

# Bosses use blackmail to push cuts in wages

BOSSSES IN some of Britain's best-known companies are slashing workers' wages.

They are blackmailing workers, telling them that payouts from company pension schemes will slump unless they accept pay cuts.

Among the worst offenders are Tony Blair's friends in the super-rich Sainsbury family, which owns the giant supermarket chain.

The family is worth £1.68 billion and Lord David Sainsbury is the science minister in Blair's government.

Sainsbury's is demanding that workers increase their contributions to the pension fund from 4.25 percent of their wages to 7 percent. That is a wage cut of 2.75 percent.

This attempt at barefaced robbery is even more breathtaking after Sainsbury's spent 15 years taking a "holiday" from paying into pension schemes.

In the 1990s booming stockmarkets meant that many pension funds had a huge surplus.

Bosses took advantage by simply not

putting employers' contributions into the schemes for several years.

Figures calculated this week show that in the three years between 1994-5 and 1996-7 employers pocketed £2.5 billion through this method.

But now that shares have fallen and pension funds are stretched, management demand workers pay the price.

## Rescues

BAE Systems is demanding that 57,000 workers pay up to £20 a week more or face pension cuts. The workers' TGWU union has threatened strikes.

Workers at the RAC motor rescue company are being told to pay an extra 4 percent into the pension scheme.

Some 15,000 workers at Centrica, which owns both the Automobile Association and British Gas, are to pay 1 percent more of their salaries into the pension scheme.

Union leaders should be telling employers where to get off and refusing wage cuts.

## 'More houses' will mean less houses

THE HOUSING crisis gripping Britain was made worse by a shock government announcement last week.

The move effectively sank plans to build thousands of affordable homes.

The government scrapped a housing grant to local councils worth £1.3 billion over the next two years.

As a result at least 14,000 planned homes may now never be built.

Flagship projects could be scrapped in areas where many people are priced out of buying a home.

It is all but impossible for local councils to build homes them-

selves because of years of Tory and New Labour restrictions.

Councils have been able to direct some of the grant they get from central government into "social" housing schemes run by housing associations.

That grant has produced around 53,000 homes since 1996.

Now the government has given just seven weeks notice that the grant will be scrapped.

The move is part of a reorganisation of housing finance linked to the "Communities Plan" announced amid much fanfare recently by deputy prime minister John Prescott.

## Schools find their funds are squeezed

THE government promised the "biggest sustained increase to education spending for a generation".

That's certainly not how it feels in many areas as hundreds of teachers and support staff face redundancy because of shortfalls in council budgets.

A front page report by the reputable *Times Educational Supplement* tells of cases like Plymouth, where head teachers are warning that 100 teachers' jobs and 200 classroom assistants' jobs could go.

Schools in areas from

Leicestershire to Essex, and London boroughs such as Bromley too, all report that they could be set to axe school jobs.

David Hart, general secretary of the NAHT head teachers' union, says the problem appears to be "fairly widespread".

"The government's statement that all schools are going to benefit from the extra funding in the system this year is simply not true."

# The parasites who rip us off

A REPORT was released last week about 300 people in Britain who live a life of luxury on a pile of cash worth £115 billion.

They are not refugees. The 300 are Britain's richest, detailed in the *Mail on Sunday*.

Their combined wealth jumped by 5 percent last year. They include the Duke of Westminster, whose wealth increased by £260 million to £4.3 billion.

Yet the newspapers howled on page after page last week about the rise in the number of refugees in Britain, branding them scroungers.

The number of refugees from Iraq has doubled.

The number from Zim-



ALIEN species

babwe has tripled.

The same newspapers which now seek to scapegoat refugees have reported at length the persecution, threat of war and civil unrest in these two countries.



JASON MCGOWAN

## McGowans were right

THE MCGOWAN family last week claimed vindication for their three year long fight to discover the truth behind the deaths of two black men, Jason and Errol, found hanged in Telford.

An inquest jury in the Shropshire town rejected the police's conclusion that the death of Jason McGowan on New Year's Day 2000 was suicide.

Instead the jury returned an "open" verdict.

This was the best option available after the coroner had refused to allow the jury to even consider a verdict of "unlawful killing".

The coroner's move infuriated the family, but they were jubilant that the jury clearly rejected the police conclusion.

"We're delighted with the verdict," Clifton McGowan, Jason's uncle and Errol's brother, told *Socialist Worker*.

"The jury took over ten hours to come up with their decision, which shows they looked in depth at the police's failure to carry out a proper investigation into Jason's death."

"It shows our campaign has been right—without it we wouldn't have got anything like this."

"The verdict gives us more strength to fight on for justice for Errol and Jason."

## Socialist Worker

Editorial: 020 7538 0828

Circulation and business:

020 7538 3305

National office:

020 7538 5821

Industrial Department:

020 7987 1919

All correspondence to PO Box 82,

London E3 3LH

Published weekly except final week of December.

Published and printed by Larkham Printers and Publishers Ltd

(TU all departments)

Registered as a newspaper with the Royal Mail

Socialist Worker is on the internet at

www.socialistworker.co.uk

**Labour, the left and the war: debate grows, see page 7**

## what we think

# No time to lose to stop warmongers

**INTENSIFIED BOMBING.** B-52 bombers moved to Gloucestershire ready to rain death on Iraq.

George Bush and Tony Blair are in the final stages of unleashing war.

It must now be plain to everyone that United Nations resolutions and arms inspections are, for Bush and Blair, just camouflage.

They are hellbent on war whether or not they can bully and bribe other states to back it.

Arms inspectors oversee the destruction of Iraq's Al Samoud missiles. The US and Britain respond with more bombing. What has delayed the slaughter so far is the scale of the anti-war movement.

Mass protests and the opposition to war of 94 per cent of the population forced the Turkish parliament to refuse last weekend to turn the country into a staging post for a US invasion of northern Iraq. Yet the pressure from the US is continuing.

**Everyone opposed to this war has to confront the question of what to do as Bush and Blair go ahead and defy world public opinion.**

Delegates from anti-war movements in 26 countries met in London last weekend and gave a resounding answer. They called for continuous and intensifying protests leading to mass civil unrest if war breaks out.

Already in Italy large-scale protests have blocked trains carrying military material for use in the Gulf. Dockers in Genoa and Livorno have refused to load ships.

The trade union federations of Greece and Belgium have called for industrial

action against the war on 21 March.

In Britain, leaders of seven trade unions have said they will stand with workers who take protest action on the day war breaks out.

The executive of the 280,000-strong Communications Workers Union (CWU) has unanimously passed a resolution saying: "The CWU reaffirms its total opposition to the impending war on Iraq and will campaign for all members to take protest action on the day it is officially declared."

**Two million people marched in London three weeks ago. Very many people want to escalate the action, emptying schools, colleges and workplaces, and blocking city centres if war begins.**

We have to organise now to make it impossible for this government to pursue the war.

That requires setting up networks of anti-war activists in every local area, and in every place of work, union branch, college site, school and community venue.

Delegates are being elected to attend the People's Assembly, called by the Stop the War Coalition for next Wednesday.

That body aims to coordinate the protests millions would like to be part of. It symbolises the chasm that exists between popular feeling in Britain and our undemocratic, unrepresentative government.

A movement that can stop the war requires groups and organisation in every corner of Britain, planning activities and linked together into an irresistible force.

The warmongers have their fingers on the trigger. There is no time to lose. If not now, when?

## School students lead the way



Picture: DUNCAN BROWN

‘AROUND 500 school, college and university students from all over Glasgow struck and rallied against war in the city centre on Friday of last week.

We forced the closure of the army recruitment office.

The school students led the way in the anti-war movement last Friday.

The TUC should ask all trade unions to walk out against the war

when the bombing breaks out.

If school students who are on the brink of doing their exams can take strike action then surely it's time for the trade union movement to react.

All students at the rally were urged to go back to their school, college or university and organise anti-war groups.

They were encouraged to take

further strike action on Wednesday of this week.

We hope that the anti-war movement in schools will grow, and we will be able to get even more people to walk out the day war is declared.'

**AFTAB ANWAR** (Scottish Socialist Youth), and **LOUISA ORAM** (school student at Glasgow's Shawlands Academy)

## Afraid of US ally

THE GOVERNMENT and its friends in the media spent last week cynically exploiting the suffering of the Kurdish people in an attempt to justify attacking Iraq.

They found tame Kurdish figures from the rival forces that run northern Iraq to claim all Kurds back war.

Yet by the end of the week reports were flooding out of the area from honest journalists that the mass of Kurdish people there are terrified of invasion, not by Iraqi troops, but by Turkey.

At a football match between an Iraqi and a Kurdish team in northern Iraq the main chant from the 10,000 Kurdish fans was "Stuff the Turks".

The Turkish army already has a presence in northern Iraq. The Turkish state would like to see the Kurds in northern Iraq crushed rather than take steps towards their independence.

Turkey, a key Western ally, wants to grab Kurdish land—all in the name of a war that Bush, Blair and their apologists say is a war for liberation.

## Stop the War Coalition calls for...

### The People's Assembly

Wednesday 12 March, 10am-5pm,  
Westminster Central Hall  
(opposite Palace of Westminster),  
off Parliament Square, London

The government won't listen so we're calling our own parliament. Elect your delegates from local rallies, trade unions, mosques, churches, peace organisations, Constituency Labour Parties, councils and other representative bodies.

For full details go to [www.stopwar.org.uk](http://www.stopwar.org.uk) or phone 020 7053 2153/4/5/6



## 'Western bombs are murdering Iraqis'

‘LAST WEDNESDAY the US bombed a village just north of Basra.

A house was hit. Fifteen of my relatives were inside. This is what the bombing means.

They are murdering innocent Iraqis, people who oppose Saddam Hussein, people who moved to the no-fly zone because they thought they would be safe.

I got out of Iraq in 1980. I want to see liberation. But it cannot come by Western bombs.

The best thing they could do to liberate people would be to lift the sanctions that are killing people and that leave them dependent on the regime.

The West will not do this. Instead, they kill for their own interests in the name of humanitarianism.

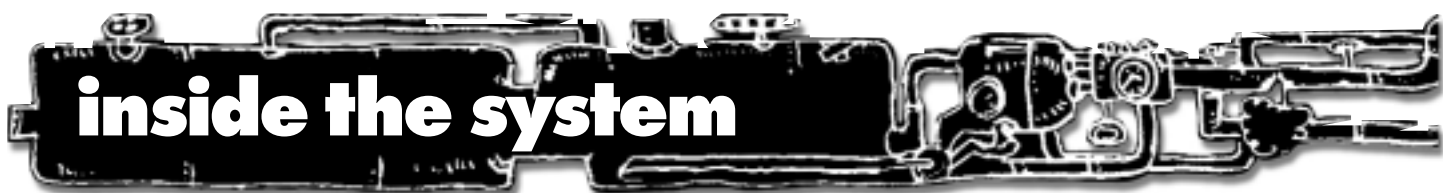
I rang the Ministry of Defence to find out what they said about last week's bombing. They said they would not tell me in the interests of national security.

I appeal to people to protest against this crime.'

**SUSAN KARIM, Dundee**

**In the event of war Socialist Worker will produce a special edition.**

**Socialist Worker supporters should be prepared to distribute it at a few hours notice.**



## inside the system

### Murder on the roads

TWELVE YEAR old Rachel Sumner died last week after being hit by a police car as she crossed the road in Manchester.

The Police Complaints Authority (PCA) has launched an investigation after local residents claimed the police car was travelling too quickly in a residential area.

Rachel's is the latest in a rising tide of deaths caused by police cars.

In 1997-8 nine people were killed by police cars. That had soared to 44 by 2001-2.

The PCA published a report last year.

It examined 85 cases between 1998 and 2001 involving 91 deaths.

Of the cases investigated the biggest number, 42 percent, were pursuits for "traffic violations".

# Unleashing toxic war on the poor

**MILLIONS OF people are poisoned by toxic chemicals which are sold for use as pesticides in the world's poorest countries.**

These chemicals are banned or heavily restricted for agricultural use in countries like Britain and the US because of their effects on workers who use them.

Up to 250,000 people a year are being killed by exposure to such chemicals, according to a report published last week by the Environmental Justice Foundation.

Dr Jacques Diouf, the director general of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, says, "Many pesticides that have been banned in industrialised countries are still marketed and used in developing countries."

Corporations which have invested in production facilities are determined to get a hefty return on their money.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) says that "three million reported cases of pesticide-associated acute poisoning occur annually, resulting in 220,000 deaths".

The WHO estimates that "25 million workers are poisoned by pesticides every year".

Especially sickening is the number of cases of birth deformities caused by mothers' exposure to the agrochemicals.

This echoes the wave of such birth deformities following the US's use of the pesticide Agent Orange as a chemical weapon in the Vietnam War.

One of the agrochemicals still killing today is TCDD, a by-product of making 245T, a key ingredient of Agent Orange.

### THINGS THEY SAY

**"WE WILL resort to using the just repressive force of the state."**

■ GIUSEPPE PISANU, Italy's interior minister, on proposals to arrest and jail anti-war protesters

**"I cannot advocate a dirty war in which hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians will be killed."**

■ STEPHEN BROOKES, held hostage by the Iraqi regime in the 1991 Gulf War

**"HAVE WE indeed become blind, as Russia is blind in Chechnya, to our own advice, that military power is not the answer to terrorism?"**

■ Letter to US Secretary of State Colin Powell from senior US diplomat JOHN BRADY KIESLING, who resigned last week in protest at US policy on Iraq

**"OUR single-minded and unfortunately rather demagogic fixation on Iraq is undermining the legitimacy of US leadership."**

■ ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI, former national security adviser to former US president Jimmy Carter

**"I THINK it's a better system. People should not be worried about PFI."**

■ Chancellor GORDON BROWN in the latest issue of *Inside Labour*, the Labour members' magazine

**"WARD AREAS are cramped. We observed facilities, originally designated as patient areas, being used as storage areas. There was lack of beds and frequent closures of wards as a result of gastrointestinal infection."**

■ GOVERNMENT INSPECTORS' REPORT on the first PFI hospital at Cumberland Royal Infirmary

**"THERE IS just no comparison. This time I might as well have been in my own bed in my own home."**

■ WOMAN PATIENT this week comparing maternity treatment at the old Edinburgh Royal Infirmary with its PFI replacement

★ **THE class divide in Britain has grown wider over the last 50 years, according to the world's biggest long term study of people's lives.**

The Institute of Education in London published a report last week based on studies tracking 40,000 people from birth to adulthood.

The studies followed everyone born in one week in the years 1946, 1958 and 1970. It compared their lives through to 2000.

The conclusion was stark: "class polarities have strengthened and relative poverty has increased in Britain over the last 50 years."

### Naked truth censored

BBC PRESENTER John Peel had arranged an interview with an eccentric "nude rights" campaigner for his *Home Truths* programme.

Everything was set for the interview with the naked Steve Gough at the studio when BBC chiefs stepped in.

Gough would have to cover up, they ordered, or the interview would be cancelled.

After all, some people could be offended at what they might see on their screens.

Except the interview was for a radio broadcast.



## Bosses feared spreading fire

SOME employers were terrified that the sympathy shown to striking firefighters could have translated into solidarity strikes.

The Newsquest newspaper group is one of Britain's biggest.

Newsquest chief executive Paul Davidson wrote to managers, "The current dispute between the fire workers and the government has brought the issue of industrial action very much to the front of

people's minds.

"Will you please now prepare detailed and fully costed contingency plans to ensure continuous production/publication in the event of strike action."

Managers at the *Wirral Globe* estimated it would cost around £2,000 a week to use scabs if the six staff walked out in support of the firefighters.

The company worried even this might not work if there was "a total walkout".

★ **WHERE do the pundits on the *Financial Times*, Britain's top financial paper, get their insights from?**

Senior journalist Julia Cuthbertson has been suspended after appearing in a cable TV documentary.

She was pictured taking part in a seance hoping to contact former deputy editor Peter Martin, who died last year.

### Peace train

CONGRATULATIONS to the Eurostar worker who had to serve US treasury secretary John Snow and his entourage last week.

The train attendant omitted to supply the cutlery needed to eat breakfast.

The US government officials remonstrated.

"Give peace a chance!" shouted the rail worker, before adding an unprintable comment about George W Bush and walking off.

## Try living on £1.30 an hour

JUDGES in the Court of Appeal last week ruled that it was perfectly legal for employers to pay workers £1.30 an hour.

Care worker Julie Walton and her GMB union had challenged her employers under the

national minimum wage legislation.

Julie was required to remain on her patient's premises to provide vital care. She worked a 72-hour shift caring for a patient suffering from epilepsy.

Her employer, the Independent Living Organisation, said that she only "worked" for six hours and 50 minutes of each 24-hour period.

This, they said, meant that she was paid around £4.60 an hour.

## Demonstrations



DEMONSTRATORS IN Swindon last Saturday

## Plans for more global action

DELEGATES FROM the anti-war movements in 20 countries and three continents met together in London last Saturday to discuss the next steps against war.

Everyone who spoke reported on the rapidly growing opposition to war. An Italian delegate caught the spirit of the meeting when she said, "From now we need permanent, daily mobilisation against this war."

Everyone agreed we need to escalate resistance. The amount of action planned is impressive. Already in Italy dockers in Genoa and Livorno have voted to refuse to load military supplies, and students in the US and many other countries are set to strike or occupy on Wednesday of this week.

Delegates from Greece and Belgium reported that trade unions in their countries were already organising national strike action against war on 21 March. The Greek trade union confederation has called a four-hour strike on that day to coincide with the European Union summit in Brussels.

The meeting called for the 21 March to become an international day of workplace action against war. Trade unionists were encouraged to organise whatever form of action they can—workplace assemblies, half-hour stoppages or longer walkouts if possible.

It could even include a protest like everyone wearing a badge, if that is what is appropriate.

Many countries are organising demonstrations on International Women's Day on 8 March. Others are calling demos on 15 March to coincide with action in Washington. The meeting warned the masters of war that if they attack Iraq there will be two massive coordinated global days of protest. One delegate said, "On the day they start a war we want the world to stop."

Where possible people should simply stop what they are doing and go straight to the protest. The next Saturday there will be mass demonstrations as a follow-up to 15 February in as many capital cities as possible.

Entwined in the movement against war there's a desire to reinvent democracy, to assert different priorities. That was one reason why many activists welcomed the idea of popular assemblies suggested by British delegates.

Chris Nineham

## 100,000 in Egypt

EGYPT'S CAPITAL city, Cairo, saw its biggest anti-war protest on Thursday of last week.

Over 100,000 people rallied in a huge stadium. The police had to turn thousands of people away. The rally was organised by trade unions and opposition parties.

The pro-US government sanctioned the protest, and it is becoming more worried by the feeling against war on Iraq. The National Democratic Party of Egypt's president, Hosni Mubarak, has even announced that it will organise an anti-war demonstration.

The authorities have arrested a number of anti-war protesters in recent weeks. An international campaign has been set up in support of them.

■ For further information, or to register support, e-mail Jonathan Neale of the International Campaign Against US Aggression on Iraq at [findjonathan@hotmail.com](mailto:findjonathan@hotmail.com) or phone 07986 220 641.

■ Register your protest with the Egyptian embassy in London. Phone 020 7499 2401.

DO YOU have a story for *Inside the System*? Send it to *Inside the System*, Socialist Worker, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH. All readers who send in a story that is printed are put into a monthly raffle for a book.

# and meetings across Britain—eyewitness reports

I AM 50 years old and have never taken part in any sort of political activity. But this is about life and death and nothing is going too far.” That comment came from Angela Wilson, who joined the anti-war demonstration in Swindon last Saturday.

It was one of many protests which took place last weekend including Birmingham, London, Swansea, Southport, Nelson, Northampton, Stafford, Harlow and elsewhere.

Some 1,500 people took to the streets in **Canterbury** for an anti-war protest on Thursday of last week.

It marked Blair’s visit for the enshrinement of the new archbishop. Jonathan Aitken reported, “It included local people in every school, college and many workplaces in the area.

“People who came along during their lunch hour decided to skip work and stay at home! The protest was full of whistles and voices against the war reached into the cathedral as the door opened to admit the new archbishop.”

More demonstrations are planned this weekend and next across Britain, including what looks set to be a huge protest in Manchester on Saturday.

All reports stress the numbers of young people and school, further education and university students taking part.

That mood was reflected last week in **Leeds** where around 800 school students walked out of classes to join a militant protest against war (picture and report page 3).

In Portsmouth, university students were joined by local school and further education students to stage an anti-war occupation.

Trade unionists and workers have also been organising against war.

The CWU post and telecom workers’ union has officially agreed that it “will campaign for all members to take protest action” if war breaks out.

CWU executive member Jane Loftus told *Socialist Worker*, “The vote was passed unanimously. Now we need to campaign to turn this into reality in local areas and depots.

“It would be great if members locally held meetings to discuss the war and how to implement opposition to it.”

Oli Rahman is branch chair of the PCS civil servants’ union for job centres and benefit offices in east London.

He reports, “We had our branches’ annual general meeting last week with a speaker from the Stop the War Coalition.

“The 60 people there debated an emergency resolution on the war. We passed it, with only two votes against. It said ‘If the war does break out we agree to organise strike stoppages and members’ meetings in protest.’”

In scores of areas local anti-war meetings have been taking place, with many more planned in the coming week.

Gareth Edwards reports from **Portsmouth University** that, “Around 100 people joined a demonstration outside Portsmouth students’ union last week.

“Not only was it well attended by university students but there were delegations from two local schools and two further education colleges, as well as support from teachers. The vice-chancellor had walked out and said he was happy to hear our concerns and that we should e-mail him. I thought it easier to pay him a visit and plain ourselves face to face!

“So for two hours the 200 students occupied the main university admin building, demanding that the university take an anti-war stance.

“People have been buzzing since the occupation. It is the ideal springboard for us to push for further direct action when war breaks out.”

Iain Ferguson from **Stirling University** Scotland reports, “More than 250 students and staff attended an anti-war meeting last Wednesday.

“After listening to powerful speeches against war those present voted to walk out of classes in the event of war.”

From **Birmingham** Matthew Cookson reports that “the city saw a noisy, lively test of up to 5,000 people last Saturday. “The demonstration included many white, black and Asian people marching alongside each other.

“Hundreds of young people from the city’s schools, colleges and universities joined the march. Rachel, Abeer and I came from their sixth form college Edgbaston.

“I have family who live in Iraq,” said



PROTESTERS IN Birmingham last Saturday

# Thousands gather in anti-war protests

Abeer. ‘I am sure they want Saddam Hussein to go but war is not the way to go about it.’

“A number of angry Labour Party members protested against the war.

“Mark Wood, a Unison union member in Sandwell, said, ‘I won’t be a member as soon as Blair decides to go to war, but I certainly wouldn’t be leaving politics. If they go to war we have to mobilise against its continuation.’”

From **Southport** Daniel White reports, “Some 200 anti-war protesters greeted foreign secretary Jack Straw as he arrived last week to give a speech to the North West Regional Labour Party conference.

“An anti-war demonstrator was able to gain access to the hall and interrupted Mr Straw twice before being carried out by two policemen.”

Alison Gander from **Nelson** in Lancashire reports, “We held a rally of around 50 people in the town centre on Saturday.

“We encouraged people to come to the Manchester demo next Saturday, and to protest at the local war memorial on the day war starts.”

From **Swindon** Charlie Kimber reports, “Around 300 people protested on Saturday against the war.

“Terry Marshall, a factory worker, said, ‘I have arguments with my mates about whether to support a war. But every week a few more people are against it.’

“The demonstration in London on 15 February was the first time I’ve done anything like that. I came back full of confidence and full of anger at the war.

“It’s great to see so many young people involved in the anti-war protests. I’d like to see the trade unions taking up the campaign with as much energy and determination.”

“A rally at the end of the march saw a debate between local MP Julia Drown (who backed Blair in last week’s vote) and Andy Newman from the local Stop the War Coalition.

“Drown was loudly booed when she

said that she was working through the United Nations and Tony Blair had been an important restraining influence on Bush.

“Andy Newman who pointed out the hypocrisy of Bush and Blair and talked about democracy was cheered. Drown was left in no doubt about what her constituents felt.”

From **Swansea** Martin Chapman reports, “The Welsh Labour Party was rocked last week as the anti-war campaign targeted its annual conference.

“On the Thursday of conference some delegates tried to get the agenda changed to include discussion of Iraq, but to no avail.

“MP Llew Smith actually had the

microphone switched off on him as he was trying to speak.

“Many delegates then joined Friday’s hundreds-strong Stop the War Coalition protest outside the conference.

“There was a contingent from Olchfa School and a further 50 students from Bishop Gore School. Thirty students came from the art college and around 100 Swansea University students marched to the protest.”

Manus McGrogan from **Brighton** reports, “On Saturday up to 500 people demonstrated here against an attack on Iraq. The protesters made a big impact, and brought traffic to a halt.”

Tom Sullivan from **Northampton** reports, “Despite very short notice around 150 marched through the town centre in a vocal demonstration on Saturday.”

From **Harlow** Tony Sullivan reports, “Around 100 people joined an anti-war march through the town centre on Saturday. It reflected the widening base of the anti-war movement locally.”

Siegrid Prasad from **Stafford** reports, “Around 200 people marched against war from Stafford town centre to a local RAF base on Saturday. It was the biggest demonstration seen in Stafford for many years.”

■ **For more reports from anti-war activists and groups turn to page 15.**

## Join these local rallies



MARCHERS IN Canterbury last week

### Join the anti-war protests

● **Manchester** Saturday 8 March, demonstration, 1pm, three assembly points: All Saints Park, Oxford Road; Salford Crescent, outside university; and Heywood Street, Cheetham Hill. Rally and anti-war festival, 3pm, Albert Square and surrounding streets.

● **Sheffield** Saturday 8 March, demonstration, assemble 11am at local sites, then 12 noon Bakers Pool, outside City Hall.

● **Nottingham** Saturday 8 March, demonstration, assemble 12 noon, Forest Recreation Ground, march to Market Square.

● **Barnsley** Saturday 8 March, demonstration, assemble 10.30am, Churchfields.

● **Sunderland** Saturday 8 March, demonstration and rally, assemble 10.30am, Mowbray Park.

● **Newcastle** Monday 10 March, rally, 7pm, Tyne Theatre, Westgate Road.

● **Newcastle** Saturday 15 March, assemble 10.30am, Civic Centre.

● **York** Saturday 15 March, assemble 12 noon, Clifford’s Tower.

● **Exeter** Saturday 15 March, assemble 12 noon, Belmont Park.

● **Leeds** Saturday 15 March, 12 noon, Dortmund Square, Headrow.



THE WEST ignored repression of the Kurds by Turkey. Turkish forces razed this Kurdish village to the ground, killing 60 people, in 1993

# Iraqis are not cheering Bush and Blair's war

HAVE listened with intrigue to Mr Blair saying, "It is the moral case for removing Saddam."

I was one of the many people of Iraqi descent who campaigned against Saddam in the 1980s up to the present day.

I don't believe that Mr Blair's orality lies in what is right or wrong for the Iraqi people.

It lies in working in the moral interests of the large oil companies who would profit from a full round invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Even though the prime minister includes some talk of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship I have to ask myself if we can take this seriously.

Mr Blair's concern for the welfare of Iraqi civilians has gone so far as to maintain the sanctions. These have cost the lives of over one million children.

His concern for dictators should be treated with contempt. It was not so long ago that New Labour allowed another dictator, General Pinochet, to walk free from the shores of Britain without charge.

Myself and many others have long since stopped trusting the inconsistent rhetoric that comes out of Downing Street.

From the amount of people who joined the London anti-war march maybe we should now not only be looking for an end to the war plans

but also to New Labour. Hussein Al-Alak Manchester

●NICK COHEN'S articles in the *Observer* have become an outrage.

Cohen now considers that denigrating the anti-war movement is more important than opposing Saddam.

He resorts to outright lies and distortions.

He wrote about "the satisfaction of an anti-war movement which persuaded one million people to tell Iraqis they must continue to live under a tyranny".

The overwhelming majority

who marched against the war made it clear that they are opposed to Saddam Hussein.

Cohen says, "It can't support the Iraqi democrats because they say Saddam can only be overthrown by violence."

Many Iraqi dissidents accept the necessity of violence, but not US bombing.

Look at the recent *Guardian* article "Iraqis Will Not Be Pawns In Bush And Blair's War Game".

It was written by an Iraqi, Kamil Mahdi, who says, "An American attack on my country would bring disaster."

Ed Walker  
by e-mail

Picture: MARK CAMPBELL

## YOUR VIEW ●●●

### Thanks for Roy's article

I READ Arundhati Roy's beautiful article in *Socialist Worker* (15 February) on the way to the anti-war demonstration.

I would like to thank her for it. It has brought me back to the cause after a very long time! Nick Shepley  
by e-mail

### What are they trying to hide?

I RECENTLY took my camera out to take pictures in the area I live in.

One of them was a Territorial and Army Volunteer Reserve building.

This army guy, who was not in uniform at the time, came out. The police were called and I was held for around an hour.

I had to rip the film out of my camera.

Their attitude stinks, and so does Blair's. Democracy? Free country? I don't think so. We need to change our regime.

A Chivers  
Southampton

### Local anger with Straw

PEOPLE FROM Blackburn and Darwen and delegates from our trades council joined the anti-war march.

Yet Blackburn's MP, Jack Straw, is one of the most prominent advocates of war.

While his constituents



Straw's not listening

campaign for peace, he plots for war.

Vital public services are being lost across Lancashire. Yet Mr Straw's colleague Gordon Brown has allocated an initial £1.75 billion in preparation for bombing.

Straw, alongside Blair, is out of step with Labour Party members, trade union members and, most of all, his constituents.

Ian Gallagher (secretary), John Murphy (president) Blackburn Trades Council

### Fylingdales cover-up

AS A former miner in North Yorkshire I want to advise you about the misleading PR from government about Fylingdales being upgraded for Star Wars.

The "enemy" does not go for peripheral targets,

they say.

But in 1939 the RAF raided the Wilhelmshaven base in Germany, and then in 1945 they unloaded the last bombs of the war on that target.

In North Yorkshire there are Fylingdales and Menwith Hill, the US "listening post". I have tried to alert MPs to the danger but they are just not interested.

Bill Lang  
York



London anti-war march

### Bombing back to Stone Age

THE ANTI-war demonstrations have created a variety of criticism in the press.

They range from being regarded as futile and ignorant to "siding with the extremists".

Let's not forget what's taking place. Millions of people are acting in direct conflict to the consent of government.

Far from being meaningless this collective struggle nurtures democracy. It is where the power for change lies, not by bombing Iraq back to the Stone Age.

Peter Bird  
Penarth

### I can't wait for protest

YOU ARGUE that anti-war activists should prepare for a wave of civil unrest if war is declared.

Why do we have to wait for the bombs to start falling? The brilliant sense of power we all felt on the 15 February demonstration should be channelled now into action that can shake the government.

The Stop the War Coalition could set a date when everyone could take to the streets and try to walk out of work.

Mike Hill  
Birmingham

### Will war bring democracy?

I THINK you should support people in struggle. That is how I found myself supporting Iraqi socialists who wish to rid themselves of Saddam.

Why are you not following the same principle? Why shouldn't Iraqis be set free and given a chance of democracy which will give the opportunity to choose a party of the left?

Mark Compton  
East London

## Message of hope from Saltdean

THE HOME Office announced in January that the Grand Ocean hotel in Saltdean, east Brighton, could be used as an induction centre for asylum seekers.

Within days local Tory councillors whipped up a hysterical reaction amongst residents.

It was no surprise that the British National Party saw an opportunity to feed off the Tories' racism and arrived in the town.

It would have been easy to despair or to assume that everyone in Saltdean was a racist.

However this hasn't happened.

Since our launch in May 2000, Brighton & Hove Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers has built a network of activists to challenge the scapegoating of refugees.

Two of our members have lived in Saltdean for

years and their children went to school there.

It was easy to find others who were horrified at the racist backlash and they formed Saltdean for Tolerance and Respect (STAR).

When an anti asylum seeker protest took place, pro-refugee residents protested over the road. The pro-refugee argument was taken to a residents' meeting and was met with some heckles, but made others think.

Recently some 70 people turned out to leaflet every house in Saltdean with a pro-refugee leaflet.

Almost immediately STAR started receiving a flow of messages from people delighted that a stand is being made against the racist hysteria.

We feel we have put the racists on the back foot.

Becky Shtasel  
Brighton

## Labour bombs in Camden

A BIG meeting of Camden Labour Party in north London on Thursday of last week ended in complete uproar.

The party suffered a catastrophic defeat in a council by-election in Haverstock ward.

Haverstock had been Labour since the 1930s.

It was considered unassailable.

But Haverstock went to the Liberal Democrats.

The Labour vote collapsed in protest at New Labour in Camden, in Westminster, and over the war.

One ward has passed a motion of no confidence in Tony Blair.

Another passed a resolution saying they will make no financial contributions to party headquarters until the

leadership's position on the war changes.

Labour insiders confirm the haemorrhage of members.

There was mass refusal to help with the Haverstock campaign.

So far the main beneficiaries have been the Liberal Democrats.

A senior party official boasted on BBC2's *Newsnight* that opposition to the war is winning them votes.

They did not run an anti-war campaign. Instead they tried hard to keep to local issues.

But on the doorstep the war was a huge issue. More than 10 percent of the votes went to the left of Labour, to the Greens and the Socialist Alliance. Simon Joyce  
Camden, North London

## Keep up pressure

THERE WE were on the anti-war march—tens of thousands of us squashed into the Haymarket.

There was the atmosphere among people, the feeling of comradeship and excitement.

This is how ordinary life could be, were we to get rid of the vile capitalist system that's been imposed on us.

There was one common theme—disgust for the diet of lies fed us by Bush and Blair. "Arm the tyrant then bomb his people" said one banner. What a sick truth that is.

"I don't think it is a worry about the lack of support," said John Prescott after the anti-war demonstration.

How true is that though? The sheer size of the march surprised everyone.

Blair is losing support. If we keep the pressure up he might just have to listen.

Charles Sawyer  
London

# Labour, the left and the war

## 'We deserve better than Blair or Brown'

AS TONY Blair moves towards war a great debate is raging in the labour movement. It is a debate fuelled by New Labour's attacks on the welfare state, public sector workers and trade unions.

Where is New Labour going and what kind of political representation do working class people in Britain need?

Labour MP George Galloway was the keynote speaker at a meeting on this theme which took place in London on Monday.

**'THIS IS a very important debate about the future of the labour movement.'**

There are weeks when decades happen. I believe we are in the middle of such weeks.

Our country committed a war crime today. Six Iraqi people were killed in an act that went far beyond the government's extraordinarily elastic definition of its legal position.

That bombing, that act of blatant illegality, was done in our name, with our taxes, by our government.

The trade unions helped with their money to pay for the New Labour government that committed the crime.

I, even worse, sit in the Commons as a Labour MP under the whip of Tony Blair's cabinet.

We cannot go on like this. There are limits, and enough will eventually be enough.

One hundred and three years ago the national union of railway workers founded the Labour Party. At the time people were told it was premature and divisive. They were told lots of good comrades wanted to stay in the Liberal Party.

But in time the vast majority came to see that an independent voice of working people in parliament, separate from the capitalist Lib-

erals, was indeed required.

Tony Blair still believes the creation of an independent Labour Party was wrong. He told Paddy Ashdown that it was an "historic mistake".

It comes to something when a party leader believes his own party was an "historic mistake".

Of course, in time the Labour Party became a great power in the land, organising labour people in every corner of the country. Its conference was truly a parliament of labour. The battles and arguments at it were worth having and could be won.

### Votes

Now we have to face uncomfortable facts. The Labour Party conference is no more. Wild horses wouldn't drag me into it.

There are straw hats and balloons and trumpets but no votes, no debates. Or rather there are rigged votes and rigged debates.

I say, as someone who wrote a book about the Romanian Revolution, that Ceausescu would have been embarrassed to coordinate a conference like the last Labour conference.

The national executive of the Labour Party is a sham. Month after month the national executive votes to support crimes here and abroad by this government.



GEORGE GALLOWAY speaking on Monday



Pictures: SOCIALIST WORKER

MONDAY'S MEETING is part of a debate taking place throughout the movement

Trade union reps on that committee vote for those crimes against the policies of their own unions.

By and large, in the House of Commons I am looking at benches where a shiver runs along looking for a spine to run up.

It was a great vote last week when 122 MPs voted against war. But most of them were frightened into the lobby by the anti-war movement and over 250 were in the other lobby.

### Stand

If 250 in those circumstances cannot stand up for what is right, then when will they ever stand up?

It is wider than the war. It began to sharpen in my mind during the firefighters' dispute. I was in the Commons for a statement, quite a few MPs were there, and I realised I was the only person who supported the FBU claim for £8.50 an hour.

It is not just the peace camp that is effectively locked out of the House of Commons. The trade unions are effectively locked out. Very few MPs will speak up for unions when it matters, over their wage claims and during strikes.

The left is locked out and the peace movement is locked out and the trade unions are locked out and the students are locked out—left with the albatross of debt hanging around their necks by ministers who enjoyed free education and grants.

Another episode has helped crystallise the situation for me.

When we were taking our open-top bus around Britain to build for the September anti-war demonstration the only aggro we got was from poor, white youths spouting BNP racist filth.

The clamour around this time of the tour was a Labour home secretary telling immigrants that they could not speak their own language in their own house in case it made them "schizophrenic".

### Peace

The truth is that the people with psychological problems were not the immigrants or the asylum seekers.

If the left and the peace camp and trade unionists and students and immigrants and refugees and ethnic minorities are locked out, then

where does it leave us? It leaves us on the streets.

We have built a mass movement of millions. I have always wanted to say that, and now we have really done it!

We have not marched the millions up to the top of the hill only to march them down again or to see them drift away in disarray.

All of us, especially those in the Labour Party and the trade unions, are shortly facing a choice.

I hope Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell are right and that the reverbera-

tions of this crisis are such that the Blair regime will be toppled.

It's right that we deserve a better choice than just Tony Blair or Iain Duncan Smith. But we also deserve a better choice than Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

Michael Foot put it well when he said that if Blair takes us over the cliff to war then he may break the Labour Party.

We all now have to be thinking, planning and discussing what to do in the next decisive weeks that will shape decades to come.

## Raise banner of socialism

A NUMBER of other speakers also addressed Monday's meeting.

LINDA SMITH, treasurer of the London Region of the firefighters' FBU union, said, "On every picket line during the firefighters' dispute there have been two questions.

"They are, why is there £3.5 billion for war but no money for the firefighters? And, why are we paying money to support a government which treats us so badly?"

"I think there is a case to be made that the Labour Party has gone too far to be turned back. We need a united challenge to Blair."

MARK SERWOTKA is the gen-

eral secretary of the civil servants' PCS union, and a member of the Socialist Alliance.

He spelled out just how rotten New Labour's record in office has been, on everything from privatisation to racism and now war.

In the wake of the 15 February anti-war demonstration he said that "we live in exciting and inspiring times. It would be a mistake if we did not seize the opportunities. We must raise the banner of socialism in this country."

And he argued, "If we put our hopes for the left of the labour movement in winning battles in the

Labour Party we will cut ourselves off from the hundreds of thousands of people who want a political voice."

JOHN REES of the Socialist Alliance argued that "out of the anti-war movement will emerge people who want to go further, who will crystallise a political programme, and it will be a socialist programme and a socialist party they want.

"We need a party that working class people can vote for with confidence in this country."

■What do you think? Send us your views. E-mail reports@socialistworker.co.uk or write to Socialist Worker, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH.

socialism from below

# Tyranny toppled by its victims

THOSE SEEKING to justify war argue that dictators like Saddam Hussein can only be overthrown by military intervention coming from outside their country.

But there are many examples of tyrants being overthrown by their own populations.

A dictator much worse than Saddam Hussein died 50 years ago this week.

Joseph Stalin definitely had nuclear weapons and caused the deaths of millions of Russians.

He used the bloodiest methods to overthrow one of the most inspiring and democratic revolutions in working class history.

This revolution took place in Russia in 1917. It was a mass rising of workers and peasants, a "festival of the oppressed".

The revolution ushered in a host of new freedoms, and it offered the hope of an end to exploitation and oppression.

There was a flourishing of debate and discussion in every area of life—in politics, art, science, music, education.

Stalin did not represent the continuation of this revolution. On the contrary, he was its gravedigger.

The two greatest leaders of the revolution, Lenin and Trotsky, always insisted that the revolution's survival depended on a successful revolution in an advanced country.

Revolutionary Russia battled against huge odds to survive in the hope of revolution abroad coming to its aid.

A wave of revolutions swept Europe in the wake of 1917, most importantly in Germany. Tragically, they were defeated.

It was on these ruins that a new ruling class emerged, centred on a growing layer of bureaucrats around Stalin.

He conducted a counter-revolution to consolidate his rule and to wipe out the memory of the liberation in 1917.

Stalin viciously exploited workers and crushed dis-

**HAZEL CROFT looks at how Stalin's empire was brought down**

sent. He smashed peasants' control of the land through forced collectivisation which led to the deaths of millions.

Stalin physically annihilated the generation that had through the 1917 revolution, through show trials and mass executions.

Millions more were condemned to the living hell of the "gulag", Stalin's vast system of slave labour camps.

When Stalin died in 1953 he had wielded power for a quarter of a century.

His regime was seen as monolithic and unchallengeable. Russian military might had established state capitalist regimes across Eastern Europe.

In these countries the state organised the exploitation of workers as brutally as private companies did in the West.

But there were huge tensions beneath the surface of Stalin's regime which emerged soon after his death.

## Broke

Revolts erupted across Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union itself.

In June 1953 an uprising erupted in the Stalinist state of East Germany.

A walkout by building workers in East Berlin sparked a wave of strikes and demonstrations.

Tens of thousands of people marched through the city. Demonstrators broke into jails, and attacked police stations and Communist Party offices.

It took the intervention of Russian troops to put down the rising.

There were also revolts in the Soviet Union itself—at the heart of the "gulag" system.

In May 1953 20,000 prisoners in the Norilsk camps went on strike.

And in July prisoners at

the giant slave labour camp in Vorkuta also struck.

The prisoners demanded political freedom and improved conditions.

They set up strike committees, produced propaganda and even put on shows and political theatre.

The government could only quell the revolt by sending troops in to shoot prisoners' leaders.

Although the regime crushed the revolts, it was terrified. It was forced to release 90 percent of camp prisoners in the next two years.

Just three years later in 1956 there was an uprising in Poland, which shook the regime to the core.

Then in October 1956 the people of Hungary rose up in what was one of the great revolutions of the 20th century.

## Swept

The insurrection swept the old government from office and could only be crushed by the might of the Russian army.

Workers occupied the factories and offices and fought back with incredible bravery against the Russian tanks ranged against them.

The Hungarian workers lost, but their revolution cracked apart the image of the seemingly invincible monolith of the USSR and Eastern Europe.

Revolt broke out in Czechoslovakia in 1968. It was only crushed by a Russian invasion.

In 1980-1 a revolutionary upsurge of workers' struggle in Poland, led by Solidarity, shook leaders across Eastern Europe to the core.

And in 1989 revolutions did what many believed to be impossible and toppled the Stalinist Eastern European regimes one by one.

The 1989 revolutions got rid of the lie that the Stalinist regimes had anything to do with socialism.

They showed that even the most repressive and tightly controlled regimes can be broken by struggle from below.

# 'We're going to express the anti-war views not properly represented in parliament'

Andrew Murray, chair of the Stop the War Coalition, talks to *Socialist Worker* about next Wednesday's People's Assembly for Peace

**THE IDEA for the assembly comes out of the historic demonstration on 15 February when two million people marched against the war. That protest made it clear that people are not only opposed to the war but that they also want to do something to stop it.**

These views are not being properly represented in parliament. Last week's vote in the Commons was excellent, a real sign of how strong the anti-war mood has become. Far more MPs rebelled than had been expected.

But it is still the case that the majority of the House of Commons is backing a policy which has very little support in the country as a whole.

On 15 February there were many people who made it clear that the government should listen to the people, not to George Bush or the oil companies.

But the government is still not listening.

The concept of the People's Assembly is to speak for the British people on this supremely important issue at this supremely important time.

It will be built on a democratic and representative basis as an additional form of pressure on the government.

We are in an unprecedented position. There has not been such an attempt to take Britain into a war with so little popular support since politicians first had to submit to elections.

In normal times people are prepared to accept a certain dislocation between political representatives and the represented.

They put up with the fact that their MPs don't fit in with the public mood on a range of issues and take their revenge at the next general election.

But this is not one of these circumstances. It is a matter of war and peace and the issue is so urgent. We cannot tolerate a democratic gap of this nature.

The government has had a whole year to attempt to persuade us that war on Iraq is necessary. At the end of it there are fewer people supporting the government than at the start.

I hope the assembly will be as broad as the people who marched on 15 February. Local Stop the War Coalition groups may be the core of it. But there are hundreds of thousands of people who have

taken part in marches against the war who have no direct contact with the coalition as yet, and they need to be brought in.

I would expect to see from every area trade unionists, representatives of the Muslim community, Labour Party people, Green Party people, Liberal Democrats, representatives of Christian churches where they're against war and of course people who have had no previous political involvement at all.

It would be good if black and Asian organisations, pensioners' groups, youth groups and women's organisations which marched in London sent delegates.

If you marched on 15 February or if you would have liked to have marched, then you should have a representative at the assembly.

This will not be just another rally or another conference. It is something new, and seeks to be representative of a movement that is expanding very, very rapidly.

The assembly will be a democratic body and when it comes together it will be in charge of its own agenda.

The coalition will put forward ideas of what to do and there are two things which come immediately to mind.

First there will be a clear, unambiguous and powerful declaration of opposition to war. The precise formulation of that will depend on the assembly and the domestic and international situation on 12 March.

Second there should be a call to action. The assembly won't be sitting in isolation in London.

It needs to be connected through mass action with people around the country who are not simply opposed to the war but want to do something about opposing it.

The assembly can be a great forum for legitimising such action.



THE PEOPLE'S Assembly—a voice for those on the streets on 15 February

It will, we hope, be over 1,000 people and therefore will be able to unify initiatives and give some guidance to the movement as a whole.

All the ideas that people have of how to make the anti-war movement most effective can and should be discussed. Wherever the idea of the assembly has been raised the response has been immensely positive.

I've discussed it personally with a number of people in the trade union movement and there is a real enthusiasm about it.

It is a logical development of the mass protests. We need to make it as big as possible.\*

**'I support the call for the assembly. It can give real expression to people's desire for peace which is still not adequately represented in parliament. It is breathing life into the democratic idea. I hope the assembly wins very wide support and that everybody who can come will be there'**

Tony Benn

**THE People's Assembly is receiving enthusiastic backing from local anti-war groups, trade unionists, community and many other groups.**

AT AN anti-war rally following a lively demonstration of 100 people in Harlow in Essex last weekend, protesters voted for five of the demonstrators to be their delegates to represent them at the assembly.

The London Transport Regional Council of the RMT rail union passed an emergency motion backing the People's Assembly.

It agreed to send five delegates from the regional council and two delegates from each RMT branch in London, making a total of 40 delegates.

Unjum Mirza, a tube worker and the RMT political officer of the region, told *Socialist Worker*:

"There was widespread support for the idea of an assembly which will represent rail workers' views in a way they clearly aren't being represented by official channels.

"As well as backing for the

People's Assembly we backed a motion supporting all members who protest, up to and including industrial action, in the event of war.

"This is an excellent chance for trade unionists to play a central part in organising and building the anti-war movement."

Sheffield Trades Council also selected two delegates last week. Support for the assembly has taken off in Liverpool.

Delegates have already been elected from two local schools—Calderstone and Wallasey High Schools.

There are two delegates elected from Liverpool NUT teachers' union, two from the PCS civil servants at the Department of Work and Pensions, two from the RMT and two from Unison Community Health Branch.

This week workers at the Vauxhall car plant, the AC Delco factory, and firefighters along with a host of local anti-war groups in Liverpool will also be selecting delegates.

Over the next week these kind of examples need to be taken up in every city, town and area where the anti-war movement has taken off.

THE ASSEMBLY meets at 10am on Wednesday 12 March.

The Stop the War Coalition is calling for delegates to be elected as soon as possible at the biggest and most representative meetings that can be convened in time.

If there are mass rallies and demonstrations planned between now and 12 March, these could endorse the delegates who have been elected.

Local union branches, mosques and other groups could elect representatives.

There will be a fee of £10 per representative.

Even if all reps cannot make 12 March this should not necessarily be a barrier to election. The assembly may continue/reconvene at a further date.

Numbers attending at meetings which elect the delegates should be accurately recorded.

Phone or e-mail the names of your delegates through to the coalition office. E-mail office@stopwar.org.uk or phone 020 7053 2153/4/5/6 or 07951 235 915

## THE CHARTISTS

# Recall a live tradition

PARLIAMENT HAS refused to reflect the will of the majority on the question of war on Iraq. So the People's Assembly will convene in Westminster Central Hall, next to the House of Commons.

The significance of the location will not be lost on Blair and company. They will see that a delegate assembly right next to their talking shop issues a challenge.

To many it will seem like a new development which, in our times, it is. But it is also rooted in tradition.

The word "tradition" is usually invoked by conservatives to help enforce the status quo.

The 18th century radical Tom Paine put it well when he said, "I am contending for the rights of the living and against their being willed away and controlled by the manuscript-assumed authority of the dead."

Paine belonged to another tradition, one that we might call a people's tradition. It was in this tradition that a National Convention of the Industrious Classes was called in 1839.

Although there was a parliament with elected MPs which had existed since the middle ages, over 90 percent of the population were excluded from the vote.

Almost all MPs were members of ruling class families, or friends or clients of those families.

On the streets and in radical pamphlets the system of government was known as Old Corruption.

In the 1830s a mass movement was born to challenge the situation and to fight for representation for all—this was the Chartist movement.

It was founded in London in 1838 by working class artisans and craftspeople who combined with radical middle class activists.

Over the decade which followed, it spread to every section of the working class—miners, iron workers, canal navvies, wool and cotton operatives, builders, seamen, land workers.

In 1848 tens of thousands converged on London to accompany their mass petition to parliament.

At its peak the Chartist national newspaper, the *Northern Star*, sold 50,000 copies per week.

In 1839 it was decided to organise a mass petition to parliament, a campaign repeated twice more in 1842 and 1848.

A delegate meeting was convened from which the petition would be presented to parliament.

It sat in London from

Parliament does not represent me and I will not obey its laws

February till May debating the means by which the suffrage could be achieved.

The law forbade meetings of over 50. Delegates were subject to arrest, and several were lifted. It was almost impossible for workers to get leave from work to attend. Travel was difficult and expensive.

Yet many delegates were sent from meetings in most areas over the three-month session.

Richard Marsden, a weaver, came from Preston. He said, "I think the country should know and should be aware of the evils which press upon the industrious classes."

## Idly

He spoke of a house where there was "not a mouthful of food", contrasting this situation with "money idly wasted by the aristocracy at balls and parties".

The convention was harassed, abused and scorned by politicians and the newspapers.

Yet it did debate and draw up a range of policies for the movement.

They included boycotting unsympathetic shopkeepers and favouring Chartist ones, and calling a general strike for the Charter if the great petition was rejected.

At a Newcastle meeting to elect delegates, Edward Charlton said, "Parliament does not represent me, and I will not obey its laws." The alternative was a People's Parliament.

The assembly for peace will meet in much more favourable circumstances.

As the true potential of the assembly dawns it may be subject to abuse from politicians and the media.

The best way of resisting attacks will be to go on spreading news of the assembly and winning delegates in busloads!



A WORKER confronts his boss with the Charter

by JOHN CHARLTON

# THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

# PARLIAMENTARY REBELLION AGAINST WAR

# This was Tony Blair's darkest hour...so far

**THE PICTURE of Tony Blair being chauffeured away from parliament said it all.**

On Wednesday of last week, looking stunned and struggling to keep a stiff upper lip, Blair resembled no one more than Margaret Thatcher in November 1990, as she scuttled away after her resignation.

The mass revolt against the poll tax did for Thatcher. Now serious commentators speculate whether war on Iraq is doing the same for Blair.

The scale of last week's rebellion in the House of Commons was unprecedented.

Some 121 Labour MPs voted against the government and for a resolution saying the time was not right to go to war.

That was despite immense pressure from Labour whips (enforcers) to toe the line.

Ninety six Labour's MPs are part of the government—ministers and their bag carriers.

Leaving this "payroll vote" aside, the revolt approached 40 percent of Labour MPs who voted.

## Result of revolt

The rebellion was a direct result of the mass anti-war movement, which produced the biggest demonstration in British history three weeks ago.

Left wing Labour MPs told *Socialist Worker* that the demonstration and intense public lobbying had led many backbenchers "to discover that they have been anti-war all along".

Oxford academic David Butler said of the size of the rebellion, "There has been nothing remotely comparable in the past 100 years."

The rebellion is greater than any that took place during the 1964-70 or 1974-9 Labour governments.

And it is over an issue—war and international crisis—that is far more profound than the trigger for previous rebellions.

There was no such division inside the Labour Party on the eve of the First World War, the Second World War or the 1982 Falklands War.

That's why there is talk not merely of whether there will be other sizeable votes in parliament against attacking Iraq, but speculation about whether tensions inside the Labour Party will crack wide open.

## A growing crisis

The Labour Party could now be heading for its biggest crisis since 1931.

In that year the Labour government of Ramsay MacDonald was torn apart by the worldwide economic slump triggered by the Wall Street Crash.

Bankers and industrialists demanded swingeing cuts to unemployment benefit just as millions were thrown out of work.

MacDonald's cabinet, defying pressure from the TUC, narrowly voted for a 10 percent cut in welfare benefits. But the slim majority in the cabinet was not enough for the bankers, who wanted a government that was unswerving in squeezing workers.

MacDonald and his chancellor, Snowden, broke with the Labour

Party to form a National Government with the Tories and the Liberals in August 1931.

Buckingham Palace announced that MacDonald "tendered his resignation as prime minister of the Labour government, which the king accepted."

"The king then invited him to form a National Administration. Mr MacDonald accepted this offer, and kissed hands as his appointment as the new prime minister."

## Where power lies

Tony Blair, today, does not head a national government but is openly relying on the Tories to drive support for the war through parliament.

That is fuelling the sense of crisis within the Labour Party. And it is leading increasing numbers of people to ask fundamental questions about the lack of democracy in Britain that enables Blair to launch a deeply unpopular war.

Last week's vote was far from a glorious "vindication" of parliamentary democracy, as every paper and leading politician claimed.

If parliament were truly democratic it would have reflected the balance of public opinion over the war. Two thirds of MPs would have voted against it. Instead two thirds backed attacking Iraq.

We would not be in a situation where 40 percent of the British army has been dispatched to the Gulf before MPs have even voted for a war.

The debate would not have opened with Jack Straw speaking in favour of war, followed by Tory Michael Ancram responding in favour of war, followed by the Liberal Democrats whose official position is that war will be acceptable if George Bush can bully and bribe the UN into backing it.

And the question for debate would be, as it is in every corner of Britain, for or against war, not some form of words designed to avoid the central issue.

Kevin Ovenden

STRAW AND Blair knew they were in trouble

# Britain's unrepresentative democracy

**THE WHOLE structure of parliament is designed to ensure that official political debate is kept within narrow confines and that major decisions can be taken in defiance of popular feeling.**

At the beginning of the 19th century the mechanism for excluding the vast majority of people from any say over what the government did was very crude. Only the rich were allowed to vote.

A "liberal" historian at the time said giving everyone the vote "would be fatal for all purposes for which government exists" and would be "utterly incompatible with the existence of civilisation".

Massive popular agitation for the vote led to the gradual extension of the number of people allowed to take part in elections.

But extending the franchise did not mean opening up the centres of power to popular control.

These rested in the ownership and control of industry itself, and the hierarchies of the military and civil service, the police and the judiciary. None of these were or are open to election.

Nor are MPs really accountable.

Except for waiting for the next election in several years time, there is no mechanism for voters to turf out their MP when he or she fails to reflect overwhelming public feeling.

The voters of Blackburn may be 80 or 90 percent against the war. But "their MP" Jack Straw can still vote to back Blair.

In these circumstances parliament, rather than being a mechanism by which mass pressure is applied against the ruling class, is a mechanism for taming the representatives of mass feeling.

Gladstone, the leader of Britain's main capitalist party at the time—the Liberals—expressed in 1867 "the desirability of encouraging a larger share of the population to feel the centre of its political attention should be parliament".

Socialist historian Ralph Miliband has written that "a carefully and limited and suitably controlled measure of democracy was acceptable, and even from some aspect desirable. But anything that went beyond that was not."

As more and more people got the

vote, parliament itself made fewer important decisions.

Great rows that split the establishment in the 19th century were debated out in parliament when the mass of workers were not even allowed to vote for MPs.

So the argument over free trade versus protectionism was debated in parliament by people directly representing different wings of the ruling class.

## Monopoly

But by the 20th century decisions were more likely to be taken within unaccountable bureaucracies, or involving the senior political leaders in the Tory and Liberal parties.

The election of independent labour candidates in 1905 and the formation of the Labour Party marked a huge step forward. It broke a 40-year monopoly of the two openly capitalist parties over working class politics.

But the mechanisms that insulated the centres of power from democratic control affected the Labour Party too,

right from the start.

In government it found itself pressured by industrialists and bankers. The first Labour government in 1924 saw prime minister MacDonald conspiring with the king to stop MPs singing the "Red Flag", the foreign secretary discussing with civil servants how to keep hold of the empire, and the home secretary discussing how to beef up anti-strike laws.

And as time has gone on, each Labour government has adapted more and more to running the system.

If opposition to war is confined to parliamentary votes, there are very many ways in which the government can get its way, despite the feeling of the overwhelming majority of people.

The significance of last Wednesday's vote lies above all in the extent to which it encourages the anti-war movement outside parliament.

More and more people are asking why decision-making should be left to an institution that is as undemocratic as parliament. That raises deep questions, not least for the Labour Party.

## in my view

### Their mask is starting to slip

**WE'VE BEEN** told this week that Blair's cabinet are 100 percent behind him. It may well be true that New Labour is splitting up faster than lovers in East-Enders, but no worries for Blair—he's got solid support where it counts.

Who knows, perhaps it's some comfort to him as he stares out at the sullen faces of Labour Party members at their regional conferences, or as he rushes past demonstrators on his way to the next Middle East Massacre Planning Meeting.

Even so, there are some dangerous kick-backs. It's all to do with the Labour Party's special role when it gets its hands on power.

When the Tories are in, their treatment of striking workers and protests is based entirely on calculated assessments of what they think can be won with force and brutality or, alternatively, what's best to give in to now in order to win later.

**Labour does it differently. At the very top of the party they have men and women who were once at the forefront of strikes and protests—people like John Prescott, Kim Howells, Clare Short and Jack Straw.**

Even though all the evidence points to the fact that these ministers have become as keen on making the UK nice for big business as the Tories, far too many people in unions and protest movements imagine that they are still really on our side.

This means that political parties like Labour all over the world can often do as much damage as the Tories. The difference is that they do it by pretending to be comrades in arms. That is, until a crunch moment exposes them.

Perhaps we've come to just such a moment. Think about it for a moment—you're a firefighter, you're a teacher about to ratchet up the campaign over testing, a health worker fighting over foundation hospitals.

#### Close encounters

Across the table from you or making statements against your action on the TV are people like Prescott, Nick Raynsford, Charles Clarke—cabinet ministers who, according to Blair, are to a man 100 percent behind this war.

Now, I've no idea whether any of these people harbour secret doubts about killing Iraqi children.

At the end of the day it doesn't matter what their private thoughts are. For whatever reason, they've closed ranks with Blair and helped him hook the UK onto the US's oil tanker.

So what does this mean in the close encounters of campaigns and protest? Take Charles Clarke.

He presents himself as a fast-talking, no-nonsense sort of a guy. A Mr Fair, Mr Fixit who's going to sort out education once and for all. Of course, really it's all huff and bluff.

**He's set in the same old patterns of: if it moves, test it; and selection, selection, selection. No matter. That chatty, Labour-pals stuff has got some people fooled.**

But now one fundamental change has emerged. Ole Clarkey is in the cabinet. Ole Clarkey is 100 percent behind Blair.

As and when he wades into teachers organising boycotts of the testing regime, or for that matter when any of Blair's cabinet try and slap us down, we now know that these are the slimeballs and killers who have voted for war on the Iraqi people.

People like ex-socialist Michael Meacher, gulping for air on *Question Time* as he realises he's just joined the criminal classes—people who tell us that the war in Afghanistan was worth it, even though they can't or won't tell us how many Afghans were killed.

Now we know who they really are.

by MICHAEL ROSEN

## appreciation

# Historian for a revolution

by JOHNNY CLARK

ON SATURDAY 15 February democracy came onto the streets to demonstrate against war and barbarism.

The demos are part of a process where politics has become so generalised that a casual conversation about the weather becomes a full blown discussion about the lies and deceptions of George Bush.

Old-timers start to look for comparable events, to explain, in the words of Marvin Gaye, "What's Going On".

But what's going on now may be so significant that we will need to look for a deeper understanding of the dynamics of history.

In 1940, under the impact of global war, a young historian, Christopher Hill, who sadly died recently, wrote a short account of the English Civil War, called *The English Revolution 1640*.

**This account was no bigger than *The Communist Manifesto*, written by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in 1848.**

Yet, like their book, from which it took its model of analysis, Hill's book challenged the idea that British society was a rather nice idea that had been invented by amiable, clever people.

In fact the war was nothing less than a revolution which completely violated the old feudal landscape.

This landscape was now occupied with new social classes of men and women who began to lead their lives in a wholly different way.

They behaved differently, thought differently, and worked differently.

The revolution of the 17th century turned the world



THE ENGLISH Revolution saw the execution of King Charles I (above). Christopher Hill (right) argued that it fundamentally changed society

upside-down, an expression used at the time.

New ideas about common law and the rights of the commons introduced by a Lord Chancellor were transformed by John Lilburne, a member of the radical Levellers group, into a democratic constitution, an "Agreement of the People".

Ideas that challenged basic forms of church worship flowed into radical worldviews on the church, state, god, sex and property.

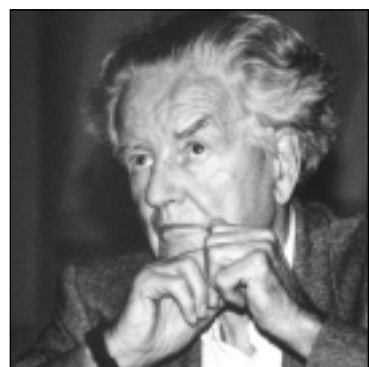
All this because an imitation

Scot with an English accent (King Charles I) wanted to go to war with fundamentalists who had developed a weapon of "mass" destruction—Calvinism.

Sound familiar?

It is a sad irony, as a new generation of people take to the streets challenging the power of the established order, that Christopher Hill, historian, activist and Marxist, is no longer with us.

Hill left a body of work to develop our ideas and arm ourselves for the struggles to come.



I recommend his books *The English Revolution 1640*, *The World Turned Upside-Down* and *Puritanism and Revolution*.

He may not have lived forever, but his ideas unquestionably will.

## film

### Fiery portrait

THE NEW film *Frida* explores the life of Frida Kahlo, the Mexican artist and socialist.

Frida was an artist of startling power, and was married to the artist Diego Rivera.

She died tragically early at the age of 47, nursed by Rivera. The film shows that during her short life Frida was artistically and politically active.

The phase in Kahlo and Rivera's lives when they take the exiled Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky and his wife into their home is only briefly touched upon.

Trotsky is depicted as a courageous and intelligent socialist who stood on the right side of history. His anti-fascist and anti-Stalinist politics are sympathetically portrayed.

Kahlo's part in Rivera's life in the US, where he is commissioned to paint a mural for the millionaire Rockefeller, is explored with depth. She longs to paint and live along-

side ordinary people in Mexico, and warns Rivera away from his luxury-loving, commission-seeking side.

When his mural is going to be pulled down by Rockefeller owing to the portrait of Lenin on it, she states that "if you lie with dogs, you will catch fleas".

Kahlo's unflinching honesty as a socialist and artist comes through with force in the film.

However, the political references in the film might be lost on someone who doesn't know about the political period Kahlo lived through.

The excellent performances from Salma Hayek as Kahlo and Alfred Molina as Rivera make the film a pleasure to watch.

I felt inspired to learn more about Frida Kahlo's politics and art.

by FARAH REZA

## film

### To repent and still be damned

THE MAGDALENE Sisters is a powerful film, based on the true story of the Magdalene asylums in Ireland. Run by the Catholic church, these asylums were often worse than prisons.

Any young woman deemed to have "sinned" was sent there to repent.

Some 30,000 women passed through their doors. The last asylum closed in 1996.

The socialist Peter Mullan wrote and directed the film. He sets out to expose the injustice of the asylums and the hypocrisy of the Catholic church.

The film is set in the 1960s, a time of growing sexual freedom. Yet the women are forced to work long hours in the laundry, are beaten for any disobedience,

and have their heads shaved for trying to escape.

The plot focuses on four women—Margaret, who is raped by her cousin, Rose, who has an illegitimate child, Bernadette, who is labelled a "temptress", and Crispina. Crispina is sexually abused by Father Fitzroy and sent mad by the asylum.

Mullan shows how the whole system is to blame, not rotten individuals.

The women are not just victims.

This film will have you raging at the brutality of the church and the sexism of society. It will have you cheering every bid for freedom the women make.

by JACQUI FREEMAN

meetings, forums and events | tel: 020 7538 5821 | e-mail: forums@socialistworker.co.uk

IF YOUR AREA ISN'T SHOWN PHONE THE NUMBER ABOVE

Big ideas in informal settings

**Marxist forums**

**BIRKENHEAD**  
Can people power change the world?  
Thu 6 Mar, 7.15pm,  
Oxton Green Community Centre,  
Christchurch Rd.

**BIRMINGHAM HARBOURNE**  
Can mass movements topple Blair?  
Tue 18 Mar, 7pm,  
Martineau Centre, Oldham Rd.

**BIRMINGHAM SPARKBROOK**  
Can mass movements topple Blair?  
Thu 6 Mar, 7pm, upstairs,  
Shahenshah Restaurant,  
Ladypool Rd.

**BOLTON**  
Karl Marx: the first anti-capitalist?  
Thu 6 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Green Room, Bolton Library.

**BRIGHTON**  
Divide and rule: why we say don't blame asylum seekers  
Thu 13 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Phoenix Community Centre,  
Phoenix Place.

**BRISTOL MONTPELIER**  
How do we fight fascism?  
Thu 13 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Bristolian Cafe, Picton St.

**BURNLEY**  
Can people power topple Blair?  
Tue 11 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Shalamar, Church St.

**CALDERDALE**  
Vietnam: when a superpower was humbled  
Thu 6 Mar, 8pm,  
Hebden Bridge Methodist Hall  
(opp Co-Op), Market St.

**CAMBRIDGE**  
Imperialism: is it the armed wing of globalisation?  
Thu 20 Mar, 7.30pm,  
CB2, Norfolk St.

**CANTERBURY**  
Can people power topple Blair?  
Thu 6 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Pascucci Cafe,  
St Peter's St (High St).  
*With Dave Hayes.*



**INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION**  
The workers create all the wealth under capitalism. A new society can only be constructed when they collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution.

**REVOLUTION NOT REFORM**  
The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say. It has to be overthrown.

**THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD**  
The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

**CHESTERFIELD**  
Advertising the body: why sexism sells  
Thu 13 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Assembly Rooms, Market Sq.

**COLCHESTER**  
Vietnam: when the US was humbled  
Mon 10 Mar, 8pm,  
RAD Hall, Walsingham Rd.

**COVENTRY**  
Can people power topple Blair?  
Wed 19 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Meeting Rm 1,  
Coventry Uni Student Union.

**CREWE**  
Does the media control our ideas?  
Thu 13 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Kings Arms Hotel,  
Earle St.

**DUDLEY**  
Can people power topple Blair?  
Wed 19 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Claughton Community Centre,  
Blowers Green.

**EXETER**  
Can people power topple Blair?  
Wed 12 Mar, 6pm,  
Dinosaur Cafe  
(by clock tower).

**GATESHEAD**  
War, resistance and revolution  
Tue 18 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Gateshead Library.

**GLOSSOP**  
Can war lead to revolution?  
Tue 11 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Bradbury Community House,  
Market St.  
*With Rob Owen.*

**HARLOW**  
Anti-capitalism: does the movement need political parties?  
Wed 12 Mar, 8pm,  
Polly's Pantry, Wych Elm.  
*With Dave Crouch.*

**HUDDERSFIELD**  
Marx: the first anti-capitalist?  
Thu 20 Mar, 6pm,  
Coffeevolution, Wood St.

**LEEDS BEESTON**  
Islam, resistance and revolution  
Thu 13 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Tunstall Rd Community Centre,  
Tunstall Rd.

SOCIALIST WORKER ACTIVISTS SCHOOLS

THE SOCIALIST Workers Party is organising activists schools throughout the country over the next few weeks.

The schools will be a chance for people to come together to debate how socialists can take the anti-war movement forward and fight for change.

They will discuss “From people power to revolution”, “Marxism and oppression” and “How do we organise for revolution?” They will be held in Lancashire, West Yorkshire and west London on Sunday 9 March.

Schools will also be held in Newcastle, Sheffield, York, Norwich, Swansea, north London, south east London and east London on Sunday 23 March.

Waltham Forest in east London will hold one on Sunday 30 March. Many other areas are organising activists schools.

For more information phone 020 7538 5821 or e-mail [enquiries@swp.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@swp.org.uk)

**LEEDS HAREHILLS**  
Fortress Europe: why we should welcome asylum seekers  
Wed 19 Mar, 8pm,  
Pakistani Community Centre.

**LEEDS HEADINGLEY**  
Anti-capitalism: does the movement need political parties?  
Thu 6 Mar, 6.30pm,  
Delicatessen Coffee Bar,  
Hyde Park Corner.  
*With Chris Bambery.*

**LEICESTER**  
Is revolution possible in Britain?  
Mon 17 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Cafe Mozart,  
London Rd.

**LIVERPOOL TOXTETH**  
Can people power topple New Labour?  
Thu 6 Mar, 7.15pm,  
Yemeni Community Centre,  
Lodge Lane.

**MANCHESTER CHORLTON**  
Can war lead to revolution?  
Mon 10 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Chorlton Library.  
*With Esme Choonara.*

**MANCHESTER HULME**  
Vietnam: when the US was humbled  
Mon 10 Mar, 7pm,  
The Arch Bar, Stretford Rd.

**MANCHESTER RUSHOLME**  
Racism: is it getting worse?  
Thu 6 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Jaffa Restaurant,  
Wilmslow Rd.

**MANCHESTER WITHINGTON**  
Do we need the media on side to win?  
Wed 12 Mar, 6.30pm,  
Withington Library,  
Wilmslow Rd.

**NEWPORT**  
Malcolm X  
Tue 18 Mar, 8pm,  
Usk Room, Newport Centre.

**NORTHAMPTON**  
The politics of fast food: why the Big Mac holds us back  
Thu 6 Mar, 7pm,  
Cafe Msaada, Kettering Rd.

**NORWICH**  
Can people power topple Blair?  
Thu 6 Mar, 7.30pm,  
The Forum, Norwich Library.

**NOTTINGHAM HYSOON GREEN**  
After 15 February, where next for the anti-capitalist movement?  
Wed 19 Mar, 7pm,  
Forest Fields Community Centre,  
Burton St.

**NOTTINGHAM SHERWOOD**  
Is racism getting worse?  
Tue 11 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Katmandu, Mansfield Rd.

**OLDHAM**  
Another world is possible  
Sat 15 Mar, 2pm,  
360 Gallery Bar, Oldham.

**PORTSMOUTH**  
Can people power topple Blair?  
Sun 9 Mar, 7pm, Citrus Cafe,  
Albert Rd, Southsea.

**PRESTON**  
Vietnam: when a superpower was humbled  
Tue 11 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Unity Community Centre,  
Shepherd St.

**RAMSGATE**  
The grand strategy of the American Empire  
Mon 17 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Racing Greyhound,  
Dumpton Park (opp ➡).

**ST ALBANS**  
What would a future socialist society look like  
Mon 17 Mar, 7.30pm,  
upstairs, Trinity Church (cnr Victoria St/ Beaconsfield Rd).  
*With Michael Bradley.*

**SCUNTHORPE**  
Can people power topple Blair?  
Mon 17 Mar, 7pm,  
Central Community Centre,  
Lindum St.

**SHEFFIELD HEELEY**  
Does the media control public opinion?  
Wed 19 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Hartley St Community Centre.

**SHEFFIELD HILLSBOROUGH**  
Can people power topple Blair?  
Wed 12 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Sports Arena, Middleton Rd.

**SHEFFIELD NETHER EDGE**  
Can people power topple Blair?  
Thu 20 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Merlin Theatre, Meadow Bank Rd.

**SHEFFIELD SHARROW**  
If money and missiles can cross borders, why can't people?  
Thu 20 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Highfields Library, London Rd.

**SOUTHAMPTON**  
Divide and rule: why asylum seekers are not to blame  
Thu 6 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Cook House, St Mary's St.

**SUTTON COLDFIELD**  
Can mass movements topple Blair?  
Tue 11 Mar, 7pm,  
Three Tuns Hotel, Lichfield Rd.

**SWINDON**  
After 15 February: where next for the anti-capitalist movement?  
Thu 6 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Swindon Arts Centre, Devizes Rd.  
*With Alex Callinicos.*

**WATFORD**  
Does the media control our ideas?  
Thu 6 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Costa Coffee, High St.

**WORTHING**  
Can people power topple Blair?  
Wed 19 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Barney's Cafe, Portland St.

**YORK**  
Vietnam: when the US was humbled  
Wed 19 Mar, 8pm,  
Priory St Centre.

**FORUMS IN LONDON**

**ACTON**  
Does the movement need political parties?  
Wed 12 Mar, 7.30pm,  
West London Trade Union Club,  
Acton High St.

**BRENT**  
What are the causes of gun crime?  
Tue 18 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Willesden Library Centre,  
Willesden High Rd.

**BROMLEY**  
Blood and oil: the real history of the Middle East  
Mon 10 Mar, 7pm, United Reform Church, Wildmore Rd.

**CAMDEN**  
Can people power topple the government?  
Wed 12 Mar, 6.30pm,  
Marlina's Snack Bar, Camden High St (opp Argos).

**CROYDON**  
Can people power stop the war?  
Thu 6 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Spice Cafe, Surrey St.

**EALING**  
Can people power topple Blair?  
Wed 12 Mar, 7.30pm, Friends Meeting House, The Broadway.

**EAST HAM**  
The bloody history of the British Empire  
Thu 6 Mar, 6.30pm,  
Indo-Ceylon Cafe, St John's Rd.

**ELEPHANT & WALWORTH**  
Can people power topple Blair?  
Mon 10 Mar, 7.30pm, Pullens Centre, 184 Crampton St.

**ELTHAM**  
Is capitalism creating a world working class?  
Tue 11 Mar, 7pm,  
St Mary's Community Centre,  
Eltham High St.

**FINSBURY PARK**  
Is rap responsible for the rise in violence?  
Thu 6 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Gadz Cafe,  
Clifton Terrace (opp ☹).  
*With Chris Nineham.*

**HAMMERSMITH**  
Vietnam: when the US was humbled  
Thu 6 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Palenswick House, King St.

**HOUNSLOW**  
Can people power change the world?  
Thu 6 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Oxley Centre, Montague Rd.

**HOXTON**  
Does human nature mean socialism couldn't work?  
Thu 6 Mar, 7pm,  
Barley Mow, Curtain Rd.

**LADBROKE GROVE**  
Can people power topple Blair?  
Tue 18 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Paddington Arts Centre,  
Woodfield Rd.

**LEWISHAM**  
Can people power topple governments?  
Wed 12 Mar, 7pm,  
Hunkarim Restaurant,  
Lee High Rd.

**LONDON FIELDS**  
Can people power bring down the government?  
Thu 6 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Queensbridge Sport and Community Centre, Holly St.

**MILE END**  
Advertising the body: why sexism sells  
Wed 12 Mar, 7pm,  
Orange Room Cafe, Burdett Rd.

**MUSWELL HILL**  
What do we mean by direct action?  
Thu 6 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Sasa Thai Restaurant.

**NEW CROSS**  
The Black Panthers  
Tue 11 Mar, 7pm, Moonbow  
Jake's Coffee Bar, New Cross Rd.

**STAMFORD HILL**  
“Take to the streets”: the lessons of Argentina  
Thu 13 Mar, 7.30pm, Cyprus House Cafe, Manor Parade.  
*With Annie Nehmad.*

**STREATHAM**  
Can people power stop the war?  
Wed 12 Mar, 7.30pm,  
Boogalu's, High St.

**WALTHAMSTOW**  
The bloody history of British imperialism  
Thu 6 Mar, 7.30pm, Quaker House, Jewel Rd (off Hoe St).

**WATERLOO**  
Does the media control our ideas?  
Wed 19 Mar, 6pm, Capital Kebabs, The Cut (nr Young Vic).  
*With Sally Campbell.*

**WOOLWICH**  
If missiles and money can cross borders, why can't people?  
Wed 12 Mar, 7.30pm, upstairs,  
Earl of Chatham, Thomas St.

Fill in this form and send it to  
PO Box 82, London E3 3LH

Join the socialists

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Postcode

TU/college/school

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**Links**

**Anti Nazi League**  
[www.anl.org.uk](http://www.anl.org.uk)  
( 020 7924 0333)

**Globalise Resistance**  
[www.resist.org.uk](http://www.resist.org.uk)  
( 020 7053 2071)

**Stop the War Coalition**  
[www.stopwar.org.uk](http://www.stopwar.org.uk)  
( 020 7053 2155/6)

**Socialist Alliance**  
[www.socialistalliance.net](http://www.socialistalliance.net)  
( 020 7791 3138)

**Defend Council Housing**  
[www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk](http://www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk)  
( 020 7987 9989)

**Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers**  
[www.defend-asylum.org](http://www.defend-asylum.org)  
( 07941 566 183)

**Spark**  
( 07905 998 675)

**Scottish Socialist Party**  
( 0141 221 7714)

**Local SWP**

**Barnsley**  
07881 558 590

**Birmingham**  
07949 028 362

**Black Country**  
07941 834 125

**Bradford**  
07811 403 299

**Brighton**  
07808 368 551

**Bristol**  
07711 718 519

**Cambridge**  
07950 142 464

**Camden & Islington**  
07961 337 640

**Cardiff**  
07815 775 819

**Central London**  
07957 316 094

**Chesterfield**  
07881 558 590

**Coventry**  
07712 047 873

**East Anglia**  
07946 269 024

**East London**  
07753 697 743

**Exeter**  
07939 558 115

**Hackney**  
07788 770 741

**Home Counties**  
07905 589 865

**Kent**  
07950 610 257

**Lancashire East**  
07968 952 180

**Lancashire West**  
07931 725 633

**Leeds & West Yorkshire**  
07734 265 291

**Manchester**  
07946 413 763

**Merseyside**  
07951 241 562

**Norwich**  
07733 137 201

**Nottingham**  
07956 477 778

**Plymouth**  
07803 620 390

**Portsmouth**  
07801 290 411

**Scotland (SW Platform)**  
07855 023 739

**Sheffield**  
07905 678 506

**South East London**  
07951 737 003

**South London**  
07939 017 973

**Southampton**  
07811 210 036

**Swansea**  
07759 901 392

**Thames Valley**  
07929 618 579

**Tyneside**  
07748 653 627

**Waltham Forest**  
07796 697 271

**West London**  
07958 996 777

**York**  
07984 132 371

# Demonstrators rock Turkish parliament



DEMONSTRATORS TOOK to the streets in Ankara last weekend to oppose the US war on Iraq

# Protesters say no deal for war

by **TURKISH SOCIALISTS**

**IN A shock move Turkey's parliament last weekend refused to allow the US to use the country as a launchpad for war.**

This is a stunning achievement for the global anti-war movement. As MPs met to discuss a deal between the US and the Turkish government, 100,000 people marched through the streets of the capital, Ankara.

The demonstration was much larger than had been predicted.

One factor increasing the turnout was that the parliamentary vote had already been postponed once. Not enough MPs from the governing Islamist AK Party had been persuaded to vote yes.

Opposition to the bill by the CHP (Republican People's Party, the main opposition) increased the confidence of the movement.

Tens of thousands came from all over Turkey on buses and trains.

They had the feeling the government was wavering and that one big push could really change the course of events.

It was a great feeling. The turnout was magnificent. It was the first anti-war demo in Turkey with a mass participation from both blue and white collar trade unions.

The march was organised by the unions with the local anti-war platforms in Istanbul and Ankara.

Marchers were still leaving the assembly point hours after the head of the march had reached Sıhhiye Square.

The large union delegations even from unions with right wing leaderships were particularly notable.

In the morning an anti-war petition with a million signatures was presented to parliament. It was organised by the No to War in Iraq Coordination.

Parliament met in secret session. This was because 94 percent of the population as a whole and probably 97 percent of those who voted for the AK Party oppose the war. No MP would dare to speak

or vote for war in an open debate.

But secrecy could not stop the impact of the movement.

The motion for war got 264 votes. There were 251 votes against and 19 abstentions.

However, the motion needed over 50 percent of those present to support it. So it fell by a margin of 6 votes.

Nearly a third of AK Party MPs voted with the opposition CHP.

News of the vote came after the demonstration had dispersed.

First we heard that the resolution had been passed by just 13 votes, which created anger and disappointment.

When we heard that the reso-

lution had actually fallen, many of those still in Ankara rushed out onto the streets again.

A group of trade unionists and anti-war activists then marched around the city centre.

**They gathered again for a demonstration in Yüksel Avenue in central Ankara.**

They were addressed by Sami Evren, general president of KESK (the main civil servants' union confederation), and Abdurrahman Dilipak, a leading Islamist journalist and anti-war activist.

A lively crowd of several thousand shouted, "Now demolish Incirlik—and turn it into a football pitch!" Incirlik is the big

airbase in south east Turkey.

Another slogan was "Tayyip—lightbulb" combined with an unscrewing hand motion. The symbol of the AK Party is a lightbulb and Tayyip Erdogan is its leader.

After the vote Tayyip Erdogan threatened MPs. He said, "We will not even be able to pay your wages," referring to the economic support package the US is offering in exchange for support for the war.

The package is a series of International Monetary Fund (IMF) managed loans that will mortgage Turkey to the IMF for another generation.

There are already suggestions that a new resolution to allow

US troops in and deploy the Turkish army could be put before parliament.

However, nothing can change the fact that the movement in Turkey won an important victory on Saturday. Everyone saw that we can make a difference.

All over Turkey people were celebrating on Saturday night. Crisis-ridden Turkey sent an important message to Bush and his IMF chequebook: "Our world is not for sale."

Now we have to continue to build on this to try to defeat future resolutions. Already one union, TumTis, has called for anti-war strike action.

**Path to Kurdish freedom**

"I BELIEVE in regime change, and I will support the government tonight," said left wing Labour MP Ann Clwyd before voting for war last week.

She had just returned from the Kurdish areas of northern Iraq and seen victims of torture and Saddam's repression.

"That's the reality of Saddam's Iraq," she said. "When I hear people calling for more time I say, who is going to speak up for those victims?"

It is impossible not to sympathise with her feelings. But one look at the situation in Turkey shows why she is wrong.

**If Turkey allows US troops to use the military bases it will not only be about getting more IMF money.**

The Turkish government also wants a say in what happens in northern Iraq. It wants to stop the creation of any independent Kurdish state. Bush is reported already to have promised Turkey that this will not happen.

Still, Turkey will want to make sure. There is little doubt that as soon as war starts Turkish troops will enter the Kurdish areas of Iraq. They have massed in the area, and unknown numbers are already on Iraqi soil.

Even if Bush and Blair were really concerned about the well-being of the Kurds, there is no chance the Kurds can gain anything from a military operation which has Turkey as one of the major actors.

The Kurds in Turkey would like to see Saddam overthrown, but they have no illusions that anything will be handed down to them by an alliance of Bush, Blair and Turkey.

## A revolt against the IMF's favourite parties in Turkey

**THE TURKISH economy imploded and the currency lost half its value overnight exactly two years ago.**

Everyone was suddenly twice as poor. Millions experienced in the most direct way possible what the IMF's recipe, the "structural adjustment programme", means for working people.

IMF officials declared that, together with Argentina and South Korea, Turkey was the country they were most worried about.

The Turkish employers' organisation, TUSIAD, warned of "the danger of a social explosion".

The government's response was to go back to the IMF and beg for billions of dollars to bail them out, in return for further doses of the medicine that had caused the collapse.

What people thought about this became clear at last November's general election.

The government was a coalition of three parties. All three were smashed.

They failed to exceed the 10

percent threshold needed to get into parliament. The largest of the three saw its vote fall from 22 percent to just over 1 percent.

*One of the slogans on the left, "No votes for IMF parties", had come almost completely true.*

The Justice and Development Party (AK Party), a moderate Islamic party trying to remodel itself along the lines of Europe's Christian Democrat parties, won

overwhelmingly.

This was not because of its Islamic beliefs, but because it was widely perceived as anti-IMF and generally anti-establishment.

AK Party supporters are overwhelmingly against any attack on Iraq and even more strongly opposed to any Turkish involvement in such an attack.

But the Turkish economy has only survived on loans from the

## Plunged into poverty

**THE VOTERS who uncere-** moniously dumped what were seen as the "IMF parties" in the general election last November had seen their annual income decline by 27.2 percent to \$2,165 over ten years.

Some 55 percent of the population have a monthly income of less than \$180. Since the beginning of

the economic crisis in 2001 unemployment has increased by 41.5 percent for the urban workforce.

Some 18 percent of the population live below the poverty threshold.

While the richest 10 percent of the population receive 32.3 percent of the income, the poorest 10 percent get 2.3 percent.

IMF for the past two years.

This is the card the US uses in putting the government under pressure to allow US troops into the bases in south east Turkey.

It is important for the US's strategy for a ground war that it is able to do so. But the government knows that allowing this would mean the end of its popularity and probably of its chance for re-election.

*Turkish governments are not renowned for standing up to Washington. Yet the AK Party government has been dragging its feet for months.*

First it declared it would wait for the UN inspectors' report at the end of January.

Then it said it would have to have a vote in parliament. Then it delayed the vote. Finally, last Saturday parliament overturned the government's deal with the US.

The mass movement has created enormous tensions inside the AK Party. Whatever decision the parliament takes, the political crisis is set to deepen.

ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN BY 12 NOON MONDAY

In brief

Driving up the struggle

ROUND 3,500 workers at the assive Ryton Peugeot plant in oventry were set to walk out or 24 hours this week.

The shift systems mean the lant could be closed from riday 7 March to Monday 10 arch.

The workers are fighting for decent pay rise.

They rejected an offer from eugeot managers which was ied to increases in pension ontributions.

The Peugeot managers also anted to axe shopfloor work- rs' profit-related bonus, worth ver £600 this year.

The first in the series of lanned 24-hour strikes saw he plant completely closed on hursday 13 February.

Bosses aren't co-operating

UNERAL WORKERS across he country are demanding a inimum annual wage of 15,000.

The 2,600 workers are em- ployed by the Co-op. The MB, Usdaw and TGWU nions represent them.

The unions launched a claim or a 25 percent pay rise for fu- eral workers. Such a rise ould put them on £15,183 a ear for a 39-hour week.

The unions have launched a eries of meetings with the Co- p funeral company managers. further meeting will take lace on 3 April.

Phil Davies, national secre- ary for the GMB, said, "Our embers in funeral services re charged with cleaning up fter horrific accidents. "A salary of £15,000 is rea- onable and fair."

The Co-op funeral service ade over £27 million profit ver the last two years.

An outcry in the valleys

POSITION IS growing to he building of a new power lant in Onllwyn, near Neath n South Wales.

Communities in the Neath, wanseaw and Dulais valleys are rganising to fight the pro- posed giant power plant which, f granted planning permission, ill burn a mixture of waste oil nd coal called petcoke.

Residents are deeply con- erned that the plant will be a ajor cause of environmental egradation and pollution.

The anti-pollution protesters ave until the end of March to uild a campaign that will stop he planning bid dead in its racks. They are already going ll out to leaflet, petition and rotest against the project.

The Neath branch of the elsh Socialist Alliance WSA) is backing the fight- ack and urging a vigorous nd determined grassroots ampaign.

This murder is still legal

HE HAZARDS Campaign, he Hazards magazine and the entre for Corporate Account- bility are calling on people to end a special e-mail postcard o Tony Blair.

This asks him why the gov- ernment has not introduced egislation creating the new of- ice of corporate killing.

The government promised to eform the law five years ago. ince then over 2,000 people ave been killed in work-related ncidents or disasters.

A website has been set up hat will allow you to send post- ards to the prime minister (and our local MP) at www.hazards. rg/postcard

London weighting

Postal workers

Big yes vote is needed to push national leaders

AROUND 30,000 postal work- ers in London begin a con- sultative ballot for action over London weighting next week.

Their CWU national union has refused to launch the campaign so the region is taking action itself.

NORMAN CANDY, the CWU London divisional rep, spoke to Socialist Worker.

"WE'RE ASKING the mem- bers whether they support the claim for £4,000 London weighting and also whether they are prepared to take whatever action is necessary to win it.

Unfortunately the national union leaders are refusing to sanction such a ballot, despite us asking them to do so.

That's why we have done it ourselves.

If, as we believe, we get a strong vote for action then it will be a mandate for us to go further with the campaign and also to put pressure on John Keggie, the union's deputy general secretary.

Should John Keggie refuse to move then we would have to

discuss what steps are needed next.

This is not about London trying to break up the system of national pay bargaining or seeking to get more at the ex- pense of other postal workers.

The problem is that the union's pay strategy has not tackled the way that the cost of living has soared in the capital.

A post worker in London now has less spending power than a post worker in the major- ity of areas in the rest of Britain.

Londoners' rents are 74 percent higher than the rest of the country.

Myth

The proportion of salary spent on housing is three times more than the average for Britain.

The vast majority of services that working people use— childcare, repairs and mainte- nance, and so on—cost around a third more than elsewhere.

The union has to address this.

There is a very dangerous myth put around by people like John Keggie that we are out to

get more by taking cash off other areas.

In other words, every pound that London gets will be a pound less for someone in Glas- gow or Birmingham or Exeter.

This assumes that the busi- ness has a fixed amount of money for wages and workers have to fight over who gets what.

We are for an argument and a fight over the size of the pot. We want more money from the Post Office for the people who do the work.

The whole union should take on the issue of pay, not just be fighting over the scraps.

It is not just people in London who understand our case. There are good people everywhere who can see that a successful campaign in London can boost the pay fight for everyone.

The union's research de- partment has investigated the case over London weighting and found that we are right. Now we want action.

We want a big yes vote and then a proper discussion about how to take the fight forwards."

Teachers

ONE NOTABLE absence from the growing list of unions officially opposing Blair's war on Iraq is the NUT teachers' union.

We need to build up a grass- roots demand to put an emer- gency motion to the NUT annual conference in Harro- gate at Easter.

All Socialist Worker read- ers in the NUT should try to pass this model resolution below. Let me know when you

do so by e-mailing jo.lang@ btinternet.com

"This meeting of NUT mem- bers congratulates the organis- ers of the stop the war protests in London on 15 February.

"We know that thousands of our members were part of that historic event, and that thou- sands more would like to have been there.

"Just one of our motivations for protesting is the profligacy

of government spending on war compared to the funds available for our public ser- vices and their providers.

"As this is just the start of a worldwide anti-war movement we call on the NUT via its annual conference to affiliate to the Stop the War Coalition, so as to represent the views of the membership and fully participate in its future events."

NICK GRANT

Defend Candy and Dave

Outrage is sweeping the unions

SUPPORT HAS been growing for the campaign to reinstate two leading activists, Candy Udwin and Dave Carr, to the Union union.

The recent expulsion of Candy and Dave has created shockwaves within Unison and beyond.

As Noreen Morris, the branch secretary of Hammer- smith and Fulham Unison, put it, "We can't believe the union would expel two people who have been fighting for the NHS at this time.

"This is an unwarranted act that weakens our union.

"Both should be immedi- ately reinstated."

Candy and Dave, two Unison branch officers at UCL Hospitals in central London, have won wide respect for their role in spearheading the battle against the private takeover of the health service through PFI schemes.

Last week Unison's London regional council gave unani- mous support to the campaign.

Candy was presented with an award to say thank you for

her work for over two years as the elected deputy convenor of the London Region.

The meeting also unani- mously passed two resolutions calling for Candy and Dave's reinstatement and to demand the union's NEC sets up an in- quiry into the case.

Signed

Around 60 branch secre- taries and union reps signed the statement in support of Candy and Dave after the meeting.

These included leading fig- ures in the union such as Jean Geldhart, branch secretary of Tower Hamlets local gov- ernment Unison, and Dave Egmore, chair of the local gov- ernment committee in Camden. Several members of the union's NEC have also signed the statement.

An annual general meeting of the UCLH branch last week was one of the biggest for years, with 96 people attending.

Again there was unanimous agreement to fight for Candy

and Dave.

The union branch also elected a new set of branch of- ficers who are committed to continuing UCLH's tradition as a fighting union branch.

The branch passed a motion agreeing to protest outside every hospital in the trust im- mediately war against Iraq starts.

Candy and Dave have also been getting the backing of other trade unionists.

The London FBU firefigh- ters' union unanimously called for the pair's reinstatement at a meeting last week.

Others signing the statement include PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka, Alex Gordon and Stuart Hyslop from the RMT executive, John Denton, London regional secretary CWU, and Oliver New, president of RMT London transport regional committee (all in per- sonal capacity).

■For the new factsheet on the case and for statements demanding Candy and Dave's reinstatement contact Camden Unison, 59



STRIKERS PICKETING over local government London weighting outside Cayley School in Stepney, east London, on Monday

Council workers

SCHOOLS AND libraries in parts of London faced pos- sible closure this week be- cause of a strike by council workers in a long-running dispute over pay.

Caretakers and other sup- port staff at 70 schools in the capital walked out on Mon- day for a week as part of a union campaign for the Lon- don weighting allowance to be raised to £4,000.

A total of 17 London bor-

oughs will be hit by the strike, the seventh stoppage since the dispute started 18 months ago.

There have already been several London-wide one- day strikes involving over 50,000 local government workers.

The workers striking this week are in the Unison union.

"The cost of living in London continues to soar so

it's not surprising that many jobs go unfilled," said Julia Coleman, a regional Unison official.

"If councils want to pro- vide decent services they need to provide decent wages."

This week's action shows there is still the stomach for a fight over London weight- ing among council workers. But much more action will be needed to win.

English National Opera

Singing out against cuts

THE CHORUS at the English National Opera (ENO) staged an unprecedented strike on Tuesday of last week.

The chorus singers were protesting against ENO managers' plan to sack 20 of the 60-strong chorus.

They closed down Tues- day's performance of *The*

*Trojans* and staged a free performance of Verdi's *Re- quiem* at a nearby church. The event was overflowing with supporters.

The singers' determina- tion to fight cuts will be strength- ened by leaked reports last weekend showing the scale of the cuts ENO bosses plan to force through. They want to axe 70 jobs and slash output.

The ENO chorus are fighting for their jobs and striking a blow for artistic freedom against corporate penny-pinching.

More action is planned on 3 April, 16 April and 8 May.

Phoenix Road, Brill Place, London NW1 1ES. Phone 020 7911 1633. E-mail the campaign at candyanddave @hotmail.com

□THE NEW issue of rank and file paper *Health Worker* is dedicated to the cam- paign against the govern- ment's NHS modernisation plans, Agenda for Change.

■For more information or to order copies phone 07970 788 873 or e-mail marknew3@aol.com

health worker
 Reject Agenda for Change
 TEN REASONS WHY...
 1. It undermines the NHS...
 2. It doesn't end low pay...
 3. It reduces the quality of care...
 4. It's about "modernisation"...
 5. It means longer hours for hundreds of thousands of NHS workers...
 6. It slashes critical NHS services...
 7. It forces hospitals to stop...
 8. It allows health to be...
 9. It makes "job evaluation"...
 10. It leads to a 10 percent pay...
 And there are many more... read on

Diary
 Upcoming events
 Saturday 8 March
 ●United for a Charter of Workers' Rights, 10am-1pm, Mechanics Institute, 103 Princess Street, Manchester. Speakers include Billy Hayes (general secretary of the CWU) and Tony Lloyd MP.
 Saturday 15 March
 ●Socialist Alliance annual general meeting, London. Postponement has been proposed. Ring the Socialist Alliance on 020 7791 3138.
 Sunday 30 March
 ●Say no to locking up asylum seekers, protest 1.30pm, Dugavel removals

centre, south Lanarkshire. Called by Ayrshire Friends of Refugees.
 Saturday 26 April
 ●Anti-racist march, rally, concert and political debate, Manchester, organised by Unison.
 Saturday 31 May
 ●Stop privatisation—the case for council housing. Defend Council Housing national conference, 11am-4.30pm, Friends Meeting House, Liverpool.
 1-3 June
 ●Protest against the G8 summit in Evian, France. Phone Globalise Resistance on 020 7053 2071.
 4-11 July
 ●Marxism 2003, central London. A week of debates, forums and meetings organised by the Socialist Workers Party.

## Civil servants

# A victory for PCS democracy

**MEMBERS OF the civil servants' PCS union have massively voted for more democracy in their union.**

They voted by 31,322 to 18,926 in favour of annual national executive elections.

This is an overwhelming endorsement of general secretary Mark Serwotka's stand against the abuse of power by the right wing "Moderate" dominated national executive.

They attempted a coup against Mark last year. A revolt by the membership which forced a High Court decision stopped them.

There is widespread outrage across the union against the Moderates.

There will now be fresh national executive elections in May.

This will be a huge opportunity to get rid of the right wing forces that have dominated our union for too long.

Over 60 activists met in Birmingham on Saturday at a conference of the Left Unity group to launch a broad-based campaign in the elections.

The conference welcomed statements by Mark Serwotka and president Janice Godrich calling for a balanced left slate to fight the election.

It was also agreed to work jointly in the campaign with other groups who resisted the Moderates' attempt to seize control of the union last year.

Delegates called for a mass leafletting campaign among the members during the election to secure a democratic



CHRIS FORD (second from right) was active in strikes last year

and fighting union leadership. The mass campaigning during the ballot was the key to winning the vote.

Motions were passed calling for PCS branches to oppose and mobilise against the war on Iraq, to fight for national pay and against privatisation, and to campaign for a political fund.

Members have also voted for an annual delegate conference to ensure democratic accountability in PCS.

**MARTIN JOHN, PCS branch secretary DWP Head Office, Sheffield**

## Chris Ford

PCS MEMBERS have won a victory in the battle against the victimisation of a union activist.

Management tried to victimise Chris Ford, PCS branch secretary in west London for job centres and benefits offices, for his role in defending members during a strike for safety in 2001 and 2002.

After a long campaign against him management announced early this week that he was getting a lesser charge.

"I'm not being dismissed," Chris told *Socialist Worker*. "Our campaign stopped that, which I'm happy about."

However management have found him guilty of assault, which Chris denies.

"We'll be continuing with legal action to clear my name," says Chris. "It's not over, because I can be dismissed for the slightest misdemeanour."

"We got this far through strike action. Industrial action can stop these things."

**A MEETING of PCS union reps in London was scheduled for Friday of this week to discuss action over management cuts in job centre and benefits offices.**

## Firefighters

CONTROL STAFF in the London Fire Brigade have voted unanimously to ballot for a work to rule and strike action over congestion charges.

An angry mass meeting last Sunday left GMB and Unison union officials in no doubt of the strength of feeling. A claim was submitted for compensation for congestion charges over a year ago.

Management made sympathetic noises. They have allowed firefighters using their own cars to transfer between stations within the zone to claim compensation, but not control officers.

Nightshift workers will have

to pay the charge twice for one duty. The workers feel that the brigade's failure to compensate them reflects a lack of willingness to recognise their status as essential staff.

"See how they get on without us," was the mood of the meeting.

In the past the workers have gone along with major changes in location, staffing and conditions. Strike action by firefighters and other control staff around the country has given them the confidence to fight.

**TONY PHILLIPS, London Fire Authority Unison branch secretary (personal capacity)**

## Steve Godward

WEST MIDLANDS fire bosses have taken an incredibly spiteful decision to victimise not only a well known union activist but to make his three year old son suffer too. Fire chiefs have ordered toddler Connor Godward to quit his nursery.

His father, Steve Godward, was sacked on 2 December last year in what the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) believes is a clear case of victimisation.

Steve is now taking the appeal against his sacking to John Prescott, the final stage under disciplinary regulations.

But rather than wait for that appeal, the fire authority has kicked Steve's son out of the

brigade-run nursery, where the staff want him to stay and his special needs are met.

Steve Godward says, "To unfairly dismiss me was bad enough. But to attack my three year old son is the lowest of the low. All we asked was that Connor could stay at the nursery until my appeal outcome."

The FBU has agreed to ballot the West Midlands brigade for industrial action to win Steve's reinstatement.

**BALLOT papers for strike action to win reinstatement for sacked activist Simon Green went out to Hampshire FBU members last week.**



PROTESTERS LOBBIED Labour's Welsh conference last week—see page 5 for report

# Local activists against the war

AROUND 120 staff and students came to an anti-war meeting on one site of London's Metropolitan University on Friday.

The speakers included Tariq Ali, Paul Mackney, leader of the Natfhe lecturers' union, and Jean Geldhart, a local Unison branch secretary.

When someone from the floor talked of walking out if war starts, they got a good reception, as did the idea of blocking local roads.

**SAM BIRNIE, east London**

OVER 200 members of the City of Edinburgh council workers' Unison union branch packed into the city chambers last week.

A motion was put forward calling for members to take part in further protests against the war and to back the call for the TUC to be reconvened in the event of war to discuss a general strike.

The branch secretary argued that while we all opposed the war, this would mean each of us would have to be willing to go back and argue with our workmates for strike action.

He thought that would scare the members but he was wrong.

Overwhelmingly members voted for the TUC to give a lead and, if it did, then they would do their bit.

The full motion was passed with only a handful of votes against.

**IAN HOOD, Edinburgh**

AROUND 50 people attended a Labour Against the War meeting in the small South Wales town of Brynmawr last week.

The meeting was addressed by the local MP Llew Smith and Jeremy Corbyn MP. Both talked about the scale of revolt taking place within the labour movement and how a new generation of radicalised youth was emerging through the anti-war movement.

**HUW WILLIAMS, South Wales**

SOME 35 people came to the first meeting of Victoria Park Stop the War Coalition in Hackney, east London, on Wednesday of last week.

We organised a stall in the local area, which took place last Saturday. We collected another 60 names of people who want to get involved.

One person brought his steel drum band down to create an entertaining atmosphere around the stall!

Another 16 of us met up the next day to plan a day of action for this Saturday. This will involve stalls, banner making, bands, speakers and protest.

**ANGELA STAPLEFORD, east London**

ABOUT 40 people came to lobby Home Office minister Hilary Benn MP on Saturday. He didn't turn up.

We were all disgusted that he wasn't there to hear people from Beeston, Leeds, tell him not to go to war in our name, and an impromptu debate ensued in his absence.

**BEESTON STOP THE WAR GROUP**

THERE WERE at least 13 Stop the War tables operating in the north east of England last Saturday.

Reports from all indicated a good reception on the street.

Roger from Hebburn reported, "One woman with her child said her son, who is 18 and in the navy, was in the Gulf."

"She said although she was obviously worried, even if he had not been in the forces, she still thought that in the modern age war should not be used to solve international problems."

In Ashington five people with connections to the forces approached our stall. All were strongly anti-war.

In Wallsend people queued to sign the petition.

Gosforth and Low Fell also reported a warm reception. One organiser, Susan, said, "Although there were hostile comments they were all made from a distance as if the size of the movement against the war kept them away."

Newcastle and Sunderland now have big demonstrations coming up.

**JOHN CHARLTON, Tyneside**

IN PONTEFRAC local Stop the War group members decided to petition against the war in the adjacent town of Castleford.

We used a petition addressed to our Blairite MP, Yvette Cooper. If war is declared we are all meeting at the Buttercross in the centre of Pontefract at 6pm.

**CAROL IVES, Yorkshire**

PECKHAM STOP the War group lobbied our MP, Harriet Harman, last week.

Unfortunately she sneaked in and out through a back entrance so as to not meet the people on the lobby.

**STEVE NORREYS, south London**

WE ARE building for a march and rally in Exeter on 15 March, and expecting support from all over Devon.

This week a 70-strong meeting of the World Development Movement on World Trade and GATS agreed to back the protest.

Elsewhere in Devon 250 attended a meeting with Bruce Kent in Totnes, a town with a population of little more than 5,000.

**MIKE GURNEY, Devon**

LEEDS Metropolitan University Stop the War and CND groups met last week to discuss action in case of war.

On the day war breaks a two-minute vigil has been called. After this staff and students plan to march down to the lunchtime protest rally being called by the Leeds Stop the War Coalition.

A motion is also being put to the next Natfhe lecturers' branch meeting calling for lunchtime action on that day.

**ANNEMARIE PISO, Leeds**

WE HAD our first workplace anti-war meetings last week, with 17 people attending at one site and 15 at another.

We hope to have meetings at our other sites soon.

Staff and students who attended agreed to build for the march in Manchester on Saturday and organise a protest at the gates when war breaks out.

**AMY, SITTU and DAVID, Manchester City College**

WE STAGED protests against both local MPs, Jim Fitzpatrick and Oona King, in Tower Hamlets, east London, last Friday, after they both backed war.

A number of local workplaces have held meetings at which calls for walkouts on the day war starts were discussed.

There are also a spate of local area meetings this week.

**TOWER HAMLETS STOP THE WAR COALITION**

## Print workers

## Bright light at Sun

FOR THE first time in 18 years a proportion of the *Sun* and *News of the World* will be printed by unionised labour.

This follows a great victory by print workers in the GPMU union at Newsfax International in east London, who have won trade union recognition.

It is the result of a four-year struggle with the employers, who also print editions of the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Financial Times*.

If Newsfax International had refused to accept an agreement by last Friday we were going to organise a ballot for union recognition. They accepted the agreement.

Union members in the work-

place have driven the fight for recognition throughout.

Our victory will be a boost to print workers in small firms nationally.

The publishing firm DC Thomson is a majority shareholder in Newsfax International. It hasn't recognised a union since the General Strike of 1926!

Now we have recognition the stone is rolling. We have members in the print and the pre-press but we are not organised in the offices.

We now hope to unionise the whole plant.

**SIMON BAKER, father of the GPMU chapel at Newsfax International**

## Hackney Council

THE CAMPAIGN against racism and the victimisation of union stewards in Hackney, east London, received a boost on Tuesday of last week.

Hackney council has lifted the suspensions of two of the three Unison union stewards.

Management have dropped all allegations against joint branch secretary Will Leng and reduced the charges against Brian Debus—he no longer faces dismissal. However, he still faces misconduct charges.

John Page, another Unison official, is still suspended and could be dismissed.

They were all suspended after allegedly raising concerns

about racism in Hackney.

Activists descended on Hackney Town Hall on Monday of last week to "make a din against racism". The council were forced to relocate to another room because of the noise.

The campaign is now organising a social event at the Ocean club on Mare Street for Friday 21 March. Tickets are available by phoning 020 7314 2800.

**E-mail messages of support to hackney.unison@unisonfree.net or fax 020 8985 6749. E-mail messages of protest to Hackney mayor Jules Pipe at mayor@hackney.gov.uk or fax 020 8356 3657.**

# Socialist Worker

## Firefighters' dispute is at crucial point

THE GOVERNMENT'S vendetta against the firefighters was poised to come to a head at the end of this week.

Labour ministers told fire authority employers to table demands for swingeing cuts and worse working conditions on Thursday after weeks of talks with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU).

Speaking at a solidarity conference in London on Saturday of last week, FBU general secretary Andy Gilchrist said, "This is a crucial week for our pay campaign.

"The employers are to table an offer which, from what we have seen so far, is likely to fall well short of what could settle the dispute.

"We are now in a battle to defend jobs, national conditions of service and national negotiating rights.

"The employers have been calling for localised and flexible pay. They want to break national standards of fire cover.

"Funding a pay rise through job losses and cuts is just not acceptable."

At the start of this week the employers, largely Labour-controlled fire authorities, were still insisting on keeping a 42-hour week and forcing firefighters and control staff to work overtime to make ends meet.

Next Monday the government is due to table a change in the law to make it easier to close fire stations. It wants to remove the requirement for government ministers to review requests for station closures.

*That, together with a resurgent propaganda campaign against the firefighters, adds up to a policy of confrontation.*

"There is no mood to duck a confrontation," said Neale Williams, an FBU secretary in London, at last Saturday's conference.

"We will need further strikes to win. And there should be no delay in calling them if Thursday's offer is as bad as we expect.

"The government is weak and divided."

The FBU national executive was to meet on Thursday to discuss the offer. A national meeting of reps was to hear their leaders' response on Friday.

Activists were to demand that strikes are called at the end of this week rather than delaying any decision until a pencilled-in special union conference on 19 March.

The lesson of the last four months of the firefighters' campaign is that suspending strikes or delays in calling action have only encouraged the government to go on the offensive. Strikes now would be a body blow to Blair's shaky government.

**NATIONAL MEETING**  
called by  
**RedWatch**  
the rank and file paper for  
firefighters and control staff  
Friday 7 March, 1.30pm, Room  
2D, University of  
London Union,  
Malet Street, London

# Bush and Blair Broadcasting Corporation

THERE IS growing evidence that the BBC is slanting its key news programmes to minimise anti-war views.

The BBC has ordered employees to censor "extremist" anti-war people from phone-ins and live debates.

An e-mail has been circulated which states, "We are attracting the more extreme anti-war views. There is no question there's a majority against unilateral US action. However, those motivated to call in for e-mail are, to my view, frequently the more extreme end (the let's have regime change in Washington, London and Israel' variety). We may sometimes unwittingly be obbled by anti-war campaigners."

So by "extremist" the BBC means people who oppose war without UN backing.

On Radio 4's *Today* programme and BBC2's *Newsnight* the BBC assumes that this anti-war sentiment is on the sidelines.

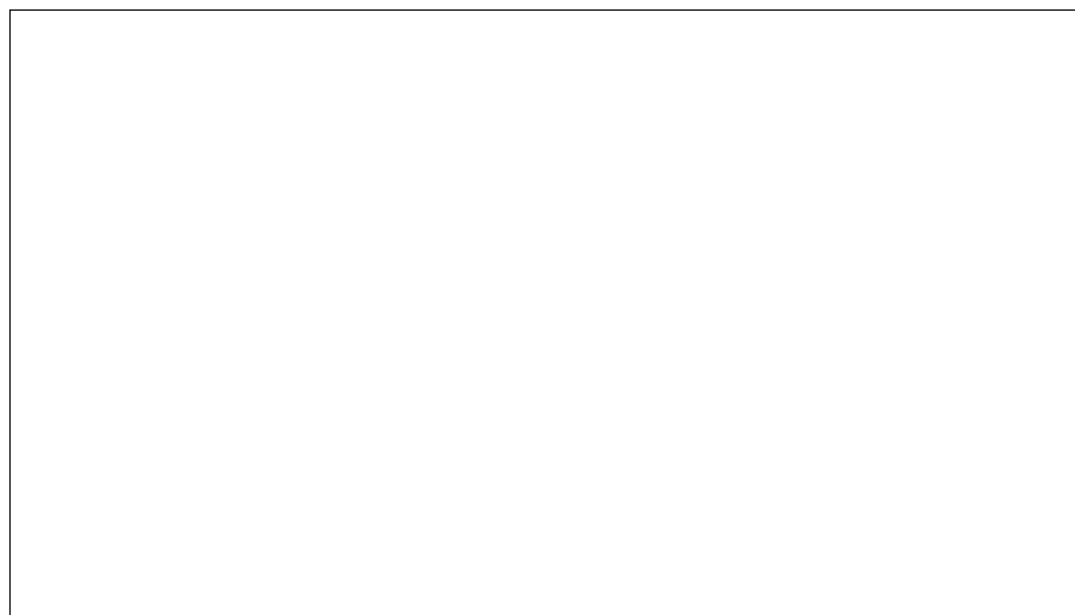
Instead it presents Liberal politicians, who are for a war with UN backing, as if they represented the anti-war movement.

On BBC1's *Question Time* the BBC picks panels composed of a majority of pro-war speakers.

Andrew Bergin, the press officer for the Stop the War Coalition, told *Socialist Worker*:

"Representatives of the coalition have been invited to appear on every TV channel except the BBC.

"The BBC have taken a conscious decision to actively exclude top the War Coalition people from their programmes, even though



THE TWO sacked journalists Adli Hawwari and Abdul Hadi Said protesting outside the aptly named Bush House with NUJ leader Jeremy Dear

everyone knows we are central to organising the massive anti-war movement."

Meanwhile the BBC has sacked two journalists from its prestigious Arabic Service.

**Adli Hawwari is Palestinian and Abdul Hadi Said is Iraqi. They both oppose war on Iraq.**

The BBC dismissed the two with no warning and marched them out of the building escorted by security guards.

The manager involved in the sackings was sent a copy of the e-mail about the war coverage.

The workers' NUJ union sees

the sackings as clearly linked to the BBC's pro-war stance.

The deputy secretary of the journalists' NUJ union, Peter Fray, said, "Is it a coincidence that two Arabic Service journalists are sacked when a war over Iraq is on the horizon?"

Adli Hawwari told *Socialist Worker*, "Managers issued press releases about our dismissal. They sent e-mails to around 2,000 staff. But we are not on a level with Greg Dyke—we are only producers.

"Why did they make such a noise about us?"

"I am clear that BBC managers

want our dismissal to send a message to people in the World Service to keep their heads down—it is a message of fear."

The BBC claims they sacked the pair for taking too many "trivial" cases to industrial tribunals.

**NUJ general secretary Jeremy Dear is outraged by the way the BBC has treated the workers.**

"The BBC has blatantly flouted all its own procedures, ignored its agreements with the unions, and denied natural justice in this case.

"These were two senior and seasoned journalists who have never had any complaints about their work.

Picture: ROD LEON

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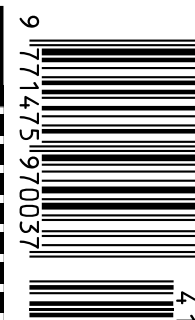
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## the Stop the cialist Worker People's

taken part in marches against the war who have no direct contact with the coalition as yet, and they need to be brought in.

I would expect to see from every area trade unionists, representatives of the Muslim community, Labour Party people, Green Party people, Liberal Democrats, representatives of Christian churches where they're against war and of course people who have had no previous political involvement at all.

It would be good if black and Asian organisations, pensioners' groups, youth groups and women's organisations which marched in London sent delegates.

If you marched on 15 February or if you would have liked to have marched, then you should have a representative at the assembly.

This will not be just another rally or another conference. It is something new, and seeks to be representative of a movement that is expanding very, very rapidly.

The assembly will be a democratic body and when it comes together it will be in charge of its own agenda.

The coalition will put forward ideas of what to do and there are two things which come immediately to mind.

First there will be a clear, unambiguous and powerful declaration of opposition to war. The precise formulation of that will depend on the assembly and the domestic and international situation on 12 March.

Second there should be a call to action. The assembly won't be sitting in isolation in London.

It needs to be connected through mass action with people around the country who are not simply opposed to the war but want to do something about opposing it.

The assembly can be a great forum for legitimising such action.



THE PEOPLE'S Assembly—a voice for those on the streets on 15 February

It will, we hope, be over 1,000 people and therefore will be able to unify initiatives and give some guidance to the movement as a whole.

All the ideas that people have of how to make the anti-war movement most effective can and should be discussed. Wherever the idea of the assembly has been raised the response has been immensely positive.

I've discussed it personally with a number of people in the trade union movement and there is a real enthusiasm about it.

It is a logical development of the mass protests. We need to make it as big as possible.\*

**'I support the call for the assembly. It can give real expression to people's desire for peace which is still not adequately represented in parliament. It is breathing life into the democratic idea. I hope the assembly wins very wide support and that everybody who can come will be there'**

Tony Benn

***THE People's Assembly is receiving enthusiastic backing from local anti-war groups, trade unionists, community and many other groups.***

AT AN anti-war rally following a lively demonstration of 100 people in Harlow in Essex last weekend, protesters voted for five of the demonstrators to be their delegates to represent them at the assembly.

The London Transport Regional Council of the RMT rail union passed an emergency motion backing the People's Assembly.

It agreed to send five delegates from the regional council and two delegates from each RMT branch in London, making a total of 40 delegates.

Unjum Mirza, a tube worker and the RMT political officer of the region, told *Socialist Worker*:

"There was widespread support for the idea of an assembly which will represent rail workers' views in a way they clearly aren't being represented by official channels.

"As well as backing for the

People's Assembly we backed a motion supporting all members who protest, up to and including industrial action, in the event of war.

"This is an excellent chance for trade unionists to play a central part in organising and building the anti-war movement."

Sheffield Trades Council also selected two delegates last week.

Support for the assembly has taken off in Liverpool.

Delegates have already been elected from two local schools—Calderstone and Wallasey High Schools.

There are two delegates elected from Liverpool NUT teachers' union, two from the PCS civil servants at the Department of Work and Pensions, two from the RMT and two from Unison Community Health Branch.

This week workers at the Vauxhall car plant, the AC Delco factory, and firefighters along with a host of local anti-war groups in Liverpool will also be selecting delegates.

Over the next week these kind of examples need to be taken up in every city, town and area where the anti-war movement has taken off.

THE ASSEMBLY meets at 10am on Wednesday 12 March.

The Stop the War Coalition is calling for delegates to be elected as soon as possible at the biggest and most representative meetings that can be convened in time.

If there are mass rallies and demonstrations planned between now and 12 March, these could endorse the delegates who have been elected.

Local union branches, mosques and other groups could elect representatives.

There will be a fee of £10 per representative.

Even if all reps cannot make 12 March this should not necessarily be a barrier to election. The assembly may continue/reconvene at a further date.

Numbers attending at meetings which elect the delegates should be accurately recorded.

Phone or e-mail the names of your delegates through to the coalition office. E-mail office@stopwar.org.uk or phone 020 7053 2153/4/5/6 or 07951 235 915.

# PEOPLE'S EMBLY